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[THE DRUNKEN SQUIRE.]

GRAND COURT.

BY THE

Author of "Sometimes Sapphire, Sometimes Pale," &c.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard,
It is the hour when lover's vows
Seem sweet in every whispered word.

Byron.

"SHE does her best to please the mistress, poor young lady, because the mistress is so unhappy; and she sings, even when her own heart is breaking, to try and win the squire away from the bottle." Thus spoke old Martin, the white-haired butler. There was a tone of pity in his voice, which touched the very soul of Hammond Danvers, penetrated as that soul was with a burning love for beautiful Norah Beaumont.

"You are a good fellow, Mr. Martin," said Hammond, hastily. "Do you think I— I might venture into the room where they are assembled?" "I will go and tell the squire, sir," responded Martin. "What is your name, please?"

"Hammond," replied Danvers, who disdained to tell an untruth about his name.

Martin went out, and soon returned, followed by the squire, who came reeling into the drawing-room. He paused a moment at the door, looking with a confused and drunken stare at Hammond.

"So you are come from Saunders' and Abrahams?" hiccupped the squire.

Hammond, despite his deep anxiety to see Norah, could not restrain a smile at the rude violence of the squire.

"I am sorry, sir," he said, gently, "that they have not behaved well to you."

The soft answer turned away the wrath of the wretched squire. Striding across the rich, though faded square of Turkey carpet, which lay on the polished oak floor, he seized the hand of Hammond, and shook it warmly.

"You are a fine, straight-made fellow," he said, scanning the tall form of the baronet's son; "and you look more fit to ride across country on a good mount than to drive a beggarly quill in a stifling office in dirty London. Faith! young man, I hate London! It gives me the bilious fever if I stay there a week. I never go if I can help it. And so Saunders wants the interest, does he? Saunders must wait. Tell him from me that if he forecloses the mortgage I'll come to town and shoot him dead in his office; and if he seizes the plate and pictures here I'll burn the old house down about his ears, stick and stone—stick and stone! An old house that has stood test ever since the days of Harry Richmond, seventh Henry of England!"

The squire struck the delicate antique walnut table a damaging blow to give emphasis to his speech.

"Seize this, and I'll seize him, and send him off to Satan in no time!"

Mr. Macray accompanied this oration with sundry oaths and blasphemies.

"I hope Mr. Saunders has not any such intention, Mr. Macray," said Hammond; "but I suppose you purpose making some attempt to pay off the interest, at least?"

For Hammond had taken his cue, and resolved to speak as much like a lawyer's clerk as he knew how.

"I shall pay," said the squire, patting Hammond's shoulder in a friendly manner, "when I get some money that I expect to get shortly. See, the estate is mortgaged, altogether with the unpaid interest, to the amount of twenty-nine thousand pounds, and it's not worth much more than two thousand pounds besides. Well I believe I shall have eight thousand down soon, and an estate—a small estate in Devon, left to me, that will be worth three or four hundred a-year, and I will pay off the interest at once, which is near on six thousand. As for the sum borrowed, I shall leave it for my next heir to pay up, ha! ha! ha! I haven't got a son, and all my girl can take will be the Devon estate, a nice snug thing for her; with all those pictures and plate, it will buy her a husband, though she's ordinary—ordinary!"

And the old man laughed aloud.

"The eight thousand pounds down, and the Devon estate, worth about ten thousand more, are the bribe which Rokewood offers to the man who is to take the life of Norah Beaumont," said Hammond to himself. "I know the earl left a small estate in Devon. Lady Viola dying in her foreign school, Norah poisoned perhaps here, and then one hundred thousand pounds falls to the share of that horrible woman the countess and her uncle. They can well afford eighteen thousand out of the profits to pay this man."

"You seem in a brown study," said the squire, in a jovial tone. "Waken up and tell me if you think Saunders will wait three months for the cash?"

"I believe he will," said Hammond, eagerly; "or longer."

He was anxious to gain as long a respite as possible for Norah.

"Walk into the hall," cried the squire, "and drink a bottle of port with me, and I'll introduce you to my wife and daughter, and"—a sort of hesitation held the squire for a moment from uttering the name of Lady Norah, but presently, he said: "and another young lady, daughter of an earl, a very pretty creature, sings like—a seraph, ha! ha! Come into the hall."

Hammond was not slow in obeying this invite. The hall with its rich antique furniture, magnificent chimney-piece, great blazing fire, and group of ladies in evening costume, was a scene worthy the pencil of a Gainsborough or a Reynolds.

Hammond's heart seemed to stand still with emotion, when he first caught sight of Lady Norah. He stood purposely as much in the shadow as possible, so as not to startle her all at once with his unexpected presence. She was looking over a large book of etchings, carefully executed by the late son of Squire Macray, the idol of his mother's heart—a son noble and gentle as herself, who died at the age of twenty-two.

Norah's wardrobe had been sent to her from Cumberland, and she was becomingly dressed in black velvet, trimmed with lace; some of her ornaments had even been sent to her, and she wore a curi- as



gold filigree chain with a diamond medallion while the front of her dress was fastened with a diamond brooch.

She looked surpassingly lovely; the high-bred air of stately repose; which characterised her attitude had in it something touching. She was no longer starved, ill dressed, insulted; she lived a lady's life, though a somewhat dull and monotonous one, and her pale face wore a look of sorrow, deep, but dignified. The terror and pain, and hourly fear which had animated her features while living under the sway of Rokewood, had given place to another expression.

The squire called out coarsely:

"Here's a Londoner come to try a bottle of port from the Glan Flodden cellar. Now, you women, be civil, will ye?"

Norah just rose and bowed to the shadow in the doorway, then sank again upon her low, soft stool, and busied herself with the etchings without raising her eyes. Hammond contrived with ease in that old hall to sit in shadow, for the place was full of nooks and corners, large painted screens and embrasures of windows.

He sat then and watched Lady Norah, looking over the etchings, Mrs. Macray engaged in talking, and conversing in gentle tones with her husband, and Miss Macray holding a fan before her flushed face, to shield it from the heat of the fire.

A plain, uninteresting, foolish face was that of Miss Matilda, and there was no sign of sweet temper to make amends for the clumsy nose and florid complexion.

Hammond was forcibly reminded of Miss Fanny Squirers in Dickens's story of the "Yorkshire School."

"Not a congenial companion for my sweet Norah," thought the young man.

At last Miss Macray said, flippantly:

"We are all as silent as a Quaker's meeting. I wish Lady Norah would condescend to sing a song."

"I cannot, Miss Macray," said Norah, glancing up quickly. "I am sorry, but I am not in good spirits; I should break down."

With a great effort she restrained herself, or a long deep sob would have convulsed her chest. As it was she looked down, and tears, large and bright, rained down her lovely pale face. Hastily wiping them away she again busied herself with the etchings.

Mrs. Macray spoke a few words of hope and comfort in a low tone.

"It may not be so bad as you think," she said; "cheer up my love, the next post will bring you different news."

Norah did not reply. The squire called Hammond suddenly by name without the prefix of Mistor.

"Hammond," he said, "come to the table, and tell me what you think of these medlars, and taste this forty-eight port. You seem to be something of a teetotaler."

At the sudden mention of the name of Hammond Norah raised her eyes curiously, the colour flitted across her cheek, she leant forward, and at the same moment Hammond, nerve by a sudden and irresistible impulse, stepped out into the full blaze of the lamplight, and cast upon her a look of intense tenderness, mournful, impassioned, but at the same time warning.

With the innate tact of the highly-bred, Lady Norah at once comprehended the position, and saw that she was expected and entreated by Hammond not to betray her previous knowledge of him. She lowered her eyes, and the enraptured lover, watching the long lashes resting upon the pure cheek and the look of calm, staid repose, forgot his part for a moment, and stood spell-bound before the high-born maiden who had won his heart.

The voice of the squire aroused him.

"Come on, come here," he said; "and show us if you can drink a bottle of port."

Hammond partook of the medlars, and drank a couple of glasses of wine, chatting meanwhile with Miss Matilda, who admired him enormously.

The evening passed away all too quickly for Hammond, who was enraptured at finding himself in the presence of Norah. Although he dared not speak to her, he found his heart sink like lead when the hall clock struck the hour of ten.

He rose to take his leave.

"My trap and my servant are outside," he began; and his kind heart smote him for his temporary forgetfulness of the good and patient Joe.

But although Squire Macray was a besotted and violent man, who had nearly drunk all his senses away, and who in his sore needs and difficulties was one to fall easily into actual crime, he was (so complex is human nature) hospitality itself.

"A follow outside in the cold," he cried; "when there is a fire in the servant's hall, and a hog'shead of ale on tap, and a larder full of cold roast and cold boiled, and there's a bed for him, and a stable for the

horse, and as for you, Lilly, my wife will tell the housekeeper to make you up a bed in the red-damask room. You are not afraid of ghosts? No? Ha, ha, ha! They say an ancestor of mine, Sir Rawlins Macray (my grandfather dropped the title when he lost the Yorkshire estate at a German gambling table). They say Sir Rawlins walks about the red room with his head under his arm, ha, ha, ha! Don't believe it do you?"

Hammond was not slow to accept the kindness of the squire. An opportunity of remaining near to Norah was a blessed chance in his eyes. There was no facility that night of exchanging words with her. She rose, bowed to the gentlemen, and shook hands with the ladies. Soon after ten o'clock Mrs. Macray and her daughter followed, and Hammond was left alone with the squire.

The latter grew very confidential as he drank more deeply.

"I'll tell you, young man," he said "that I have a friend, a first-rate chap. He don't live a hundred miles from here—he don't live twenty—but that's neither here nor there. But he has mountains of wealth, and if I can put one hundred thousand pounds in his way, why he can put twenty thousand in mine!"

Hammond's blood curdled at the suggestion. He longed to speak his mind. He longed to tell the tipsy gentleman that he read his dark scheme through and through, that he understood that the mortgages on Glan Flodden were to be lightened at no less a price than the life blood of beautiful Norah Beaumont, but prudence kept him silent. One course only seemed open to him. Norah must fly with him, Norah must marry him, otherwise he could not protect her, could not free her from the ever-increasing intricacies of the web wherein Rokewood had ensnared her. It was late before he sought the shelter of the red room, and then no ghost of Sir Rawlins disturbed his repose. At an early hour for that season he awoke and made his toilet, and then he found his way out of the house, and into the large magnificent gardens which belonged to Glan Flodden. Upon these gardens the gentle wife of the unprincipled squire lavished a vast amount of care. There were lawns smooth, and even at that late season, green as emerald, hedges of flowering shrubs ran round these lawns. At their base was a thick wood, which, in summer time, was like a dream of Fairy Land, for there was a marble fountain playing in the centre, and the paths which wound about the turf were bordered with the brightest flowers. Now although the November morning was bright the place wore an air of sadness, for the bubble of the fountain was hushed, and all the flowers were dying. The trees too, were fast shedding their leaves, and already the little paths were strewn with the fading glories of the past summer. Into this still beautiful spot Hammond found his way on that autumn morning, guided by an instinct which oftentimes befriends lovers, for there, seated on a stone chair by the fountain, was Lady Norah Beaumont.

She wore a simple charming garden costume. She raised her eyes when she saw him, and the rich blood sprang into her cheek. At the same time she rose to her feet and extended her hand towards him. "Hammond, Hammond," she said in a tone at once warm and gentle. "I am so happy, so glad you have come."

Hammond had hardly expected this hearty greeting, this frankly pure avowal of her trust, and of her affection, for the world called Lady Norah proud, and Hammond had through all his deep love shared in the world's opinion. He had not yet fathomed the depths of that pure and noble heart; he had not yet opened his eyes upon all the treasures of that loving and lofty spirit.

Norah loved him, trusted him, was willing to devote her future life to him, believing him worthy of such love, and of such trust. It was not in her nature to conceal any part of what she felt from one who would not take advantage of her generosity.

He lifted her hand to his lips, and covered it with passionate kisses. In few words he told her of his fever and illness, of the countless, of her mad folly, of her open threats, of his journey to Cumberton, and of the faithful Joe, who had brought him to Glan Flodden. He told, also, of the friendly compact between the squire and her enemies, and of his sick and secret fear for her life, and then timidly he spoke of his hope. He told her that unless she gave him the right to protect her she must remain in the power of her cruel foes.

She listened to him, blushes staining her fair cheek with a lovely red, nervously pulling to pieces meanwhile the spray of a branch she had gathered. Then she found voice all at once: "Hammond, Danvers, I love you with my whole heart."

He encircled her slight form with his arm, as she spoke thus, and she did not feign to shrink from the caress.

"I love you," she repeated, "and I honour you, for you are good and true, noble, and single of purpose, and pure in heart, but I cannot consent to become your wife now."

"Then they will murder you, Norah," he said in a voice tremulous with emotion.

"Hammond, if I marry before I am of age, and without the consent of my guardian, I lose every shilling of my fortune. I will not entail poverty on you."

"It cannot be so, he cried. "He might hold us out of it a little while, but any court of law would restore you your fortune Norah, dearest love, and that Rokewood knows quite well. 'You shall not marry without your father's consent,' said the will of your mother. Your father is dead, the stepmother cannot take his place. She would, I suppose, claim the property if you were dead; but your own mother's will could never be twisted into meaning that the power over your fortune was to be vested in her rival. If you know a little more of business, dearest, you would understand that Rokewood's greatest dread is the chance of your marrying."

Norah smiled faintly.

"He can keep me out of it the four years" she said.

"Yes, but that ought not to break your heart."

Hammond's tone was tenderly caressing as he spoke.

"Ah, it is you I think of," she said. "I should be such a burden those four years; besides—is this a time to think of marriage, or of money, or of anything but mourning, Hammond, when Viola—my precious Viola is dying?"

Her voice rose to a wail of anguish.

"Do you believe it?" asked Hammond.

She raised her sweet face from his shoulder, where it had rested for a moment.

"How can I doubt it when Mademoiselle de la Harpe, the mistress of the French school, a lady well known to your aunt, Miss Danvers, writes to me and tells me how Viola arrived at school, with a violent cold caught on the journey, how inflammation set in on the chest, and how the doctors say she is in a rapid decline. Oh, Viola—my Viola. Ah, Hammond; I love you, but you—even you, can never fill up the void in my heart which this cruel loss of my twin sister has made. She is my oldest love. Could I, think you, give you my hand in marriage while she is daily sinking into her grave—oh, that I could fly to her! But they are cruel; even Mrs. Macray tells me that my guardian forbids my travelling, and she dares not disobey my guardian. She offers to go herself and nurse Viola."

"Marry me," whispered Hammond, "and we will go together."

"But that is not the way in which I would give myself to you, dear Hammond, not for the sake of somebody else. Ah, can I make you understand how true my affection for you is—"

"Wait, wait. Let Mrs. Macray go and report on Viola, and meanwhile, they will murder you," said Hammond, gloomily folding his arms.

"I do not think so," said Norah. "Mrs. Macray is a good creature. Rokewood is tired of his constantly baffled schemes. I have liberty here, which they would not give me if they meant to kill me. They have sent me my clothes, watch, jewels, books, drawing materials, and even an allowance of pocket money. I am free from Madame Dians, a dreadful woman, who, I hope, is gone back to her own country. I pass my time as I choose."

"The plot is all the deeper and blacker," cried Hammond. "I do not for one moment suppose that the lady of this house or her daughter have anything to do with so foul a scheme, but the tipsy, reckless, half-mad squire, ruined by his excesses, and in the hands of money-lenders, would sacrifice you. Fly away from them all, Norah—my precious Norah; put miles of physical distance between you and your enemies. You have lived long enough in this parish to command a license of marriage. Let us go up to St. Catherine's, which is the parish church, Joe tells me, about ten miles from here. Let us marry and go off to France to see Viola, in defiance of your vile guardian. Oh, Norah, Norah—precious love, it is not for my selfish love I am pleading. If your peace, happiness, and safety depended on it I would wait patiently twice seven years for you. It is because I am anxious for your safety, eager for your happiness; let us leave the question of money and law for time and Rokewood to fight out. I only think of you."

"I know it, Hammond—dear, noble Hammond, whom I love with all my heart," said Norah, fervently, and she placed her hand in his. "I know that I have nobody to consult, that I owe nobody to anybody, that papa's marriage and strange will have estranged his former friends from us; alas, such is the world! Colonel Claverhouse has written a cold letter to say he cannot at all interfere, that his late friend had not thought him worthy of a name in his will, as exec-

tor, and therefore he must decline to intrude. Lord Normandy has also sent a letter to the same effect. Hammond, I owe duty to nobody but to you, and to Viola. My dear tried friends, the rector and his wife, at Bellrose, are goodness, but, alas, timidity itself. I have heard from them; they say how glad, how more than glad they would be if Viola and I would make their house our home. 'But my dear,' writes the rector; 'Mr. Rokewood would bring an action against us, and take you away.' He asks me to write to him again, but where is the use?"

"Where, indeed!" cried Hammond. "No, Norah, come with me my love, pack your things, and come to the road beyond the wood about dusk this evening; there I will be with the trap. Think of Viola; think, too, of the vile countess, who has given me so many days to make up my mind about marrying her, and threatens me coolly to kill you if I do not comply."

"Ah, but she thinks I am shut up in prison at Cumberton. She does not know that I am free and away from Rokewood; he has not told her, depend upon it."

"Norah, Norah, you are staying to your death. Why will you not listen to me?"

"Because I shall be a burden and a care upon my noble Hammond for four long years; because your father may withdraw his allowance through the persuasions of Rokewood; because, while Viola lies dying and my father has not slept in his grave three months."

As she spoke the branches rustled violently behind them, and a man, bent down with the weight of years, an old peasant whose snowy beard descended to his ragged vest and whose snowy hair strayed low on his threadbare coat, came towards the lovers, holding out his hand for alms.

The face of this beggar was ghastly pale; he seemed ill and suffering; he did not speak one single word.

"Poor, dear, old man," said Norah, tenderly; "he, too, suffers. Thank heaven, I have it in my power to give him money—take that," and she put half-a-sovereign in the old man's hand.

The generous Hammond doubled the gift. The old beggar's tears rained fast and thick on his wrinkled hands, and he whispered faintly:

"Thank you, bless you both."

"See, that old patriarch has blessed us," cried Hammond with a smile; "say that you will come to me, Norah?"

"No," she answered, "no, dear Hammond, as I see things now I feel it would not be right. Let a few months pass; pray that Viola may yet be spared, and then I will think of it; and listen, Hammond, if danger arises; if I suspect it in the least, I will write to you. Where will you be?"

"In the village of Yauworth below," replied Hammond. "I shall not stir from that spot. I shall remain there hoping to hear from you within the week. There is an inn called the White Leopard; send to me there, and Norah, count upon me to the shedding of my last drop of blood in your defence."

He gathered her to his heart as he spoke in a rapt embrace; then they parted slowly and with lingering footsteps, but they were to meet again as strangers at the breakfast-table of the squire.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Oh, thou that judgest all things, stay my
Thoughts; my thoughts that labour to
Persuade my soul,
Some violent hands were laid on Humphrey's life!

Shakespeare.

LADY MONKHOUSE, schemer, woman of the world, etiquette, cruel, cold-blooded and heartless as she had been all her life; woman without one womanly instinct; mother without one motherly impulse; base, treacherous and pitiless—Lady Monkhouse, to her own intense wonderment, was laid hold upon suddenly by one of those tremendous passions which possess the human creature like the devil possessed the men of olden times.

Lady Monkhouse, wealthy, titled, handsome, the twin children of the man she had hated captive in her hands, their rich inheritance ready to fall to her share; Lady Monkhouse, who, when the days of false mourning for her lord should be accomplished, might count upon marriage with one of the highest in the kingdom, sat suffering and wild with impatient and devouring love amid the splendours of her great drawing-room in Grosvenor Square, waiting for news from Hammond Danvers. She listened for the knock of the postman breathlessly. She was an untamed savage at heart, despite the rubies gleaming at her round white throat and in the snake-like coils of her raven hair; despite her rustling robes of flowered silk, despite the gold strangled harp, to which she sang love songs, deep, pathetic Spanish ballads, learned during her life abroad. It was the second

week in November; Parliament was about to meet for a short session previous to the Christmas holidays, and several families flocked to town. The supposed widow of one of England's greatest earls, the supposed mother of an infant noble, was not left neglected amid the lovely splendours of her town mansion. That world which Goldsmith so sadly, and, alas! so truthfully addresses as "The oppressor whom it believed to be at once the mother of an earl and the richest widow in England. Now was her hour, then, of triumph, one would have said. Now is the hour of which she had dreamed all her youth.

While vaulting round a circle on the back of a clever dancing horse; while sinking through artificial flower-wreaths before a vulgar audience; while eating her meagre supper of soup and bread in a wretched garret; while amusing herself with winning the heart of a young man who had loved her in her girlhood, and flinging away that heart and trampling upon it; while living a life of sin to which her uncle sold her in the house of the rich French banker, whom she falsely called her husband—

All through those years, all through those scenes, the countess had dreamed a dream of high daring, audacious ambition. Now it was realised—that very dream! She sat in state, titled, jewelled, dowered with wealth, the proud ones of the earth come to do her homage, and yet her spirit was humbled to the dust, at that very moment, by the pangs of an unrequited love. The apples of Sodom turned to dust in her mouth. From golden chalices she drank of the waters of Marah. Outwardly she smiled like a syren, and glittered with jewels like an empress, but her heart knew its own bitterness. Her pleasures came to her, but mocked her in the very possession. Oh, most righteous retribution on the wrong-doer! How she chafed in secret over the silence, the absolute, crushing silence of the man she loved! As last she could bear it no longer.

Rokewood had written to tell her of the removal of Lady Norah to the house of a certain Squire Macray.

"A poor, tipsy miscreant," he wrote, "whose whole estate is mortgaged to within two thousand pounds of its value. He will do anything for money. His conscience is put to sleep with port wine. Chippenham and two others are in the neighbourhood, at least they are skulking about at Penniston; the market town. Nothing could have happened better for our purpose than the flight of this girl to the house of Squire Macray. His wife is a pious woman, known in all the country for her charities. I have written to Claverhouse and Normandy to tell them that I will not (after the false accusations of that headstrong girl) consent to have her any longer under my care; that to show how innocent I am of what she is wicked enough to accuse me of I have resigned all responsibility, and transferred my guardianship to a certain Squire Macray, a friend of her own choosing. The colonel and the earl have written coldly to her, insolently to me. They are offended with Monkhouse for not making them executors, and they show their dignity by having nothing to do with the complaints of his children. Everything works well. Viola is dying fast, Mademoiselle de la Harpe writes word. Mrs. Macray is gone to Paris to see her, but of course old Macray forbids Norah going. She is alone with him and his daughter. Madame Diana is gone to Glan Flodden to act as housekeeper and chaperon to the two girls. I leave everything in her hands. Norah is very insolent to her, but there is no fear of her running away. She is attached to Mrs. Macray, and believes no actual harm of the squire; so expect news in a week."

"This must not be" cried the countess, stamping on the ground; "if the girl is killed he will hate me eternally. I will hurry up to Penniston this very night. Stay, I have a reception here this evening. No, matter! I will feign illness. That Foreign Minister is coming too, all diamond stars, and blazing with the wealth of the Russian Court; he is a magnificent man, and suitable to me in years. A prince to boot, and he admires my dark eyes, and my Spanish songs; and the mystery which shrouds my antecedents makes me more interesting, sheds a halo of romance about me—in his opinion. The prince thinks the brilliant English widow might grace a Russian princedom."

"Well and good, so I should, but I think of another prince, an Indian in green satin, who came here in his white turban, his splendid young face glowing, dark beneath it like a costly jewel, glorious eyes, black as night, smart brow, dusky hair, gleaming white teeth. Even then while he stood before me in his quaint graceful disguise I felt my heart stir strangely, but afterwards, when he lay ill and fevered and unconscious, the white wounded arm bare on the coverlid, the mustached lip drawn up in pain,

the eyes full of lurid fire, I gave up my heart into his keeping. I became his slave. Great Heaven! am I mad that I am so changed, that the possession of wealth, the power of taking the lives of those girls, and enjoying their riches, the prospect of marriage with a royal prince, all, all profit me nothing, all are as dust in the balance weighed against the precious priceless love of Hammond Danvers. I will be his wife, he shall bind himself to me for life.

The violent woman caught up the hem of rich silk robe and rent it savagely as she spoke: "And now to dissemble, now to profess that I am ill, and cannot receive, and this evening I start for Penniston. The servants of course will talk—servants always do talk!"

She rang the bell, and gave orders in a peremptory tone for her carriage to take her to the station to meet the train for the north. A poor—jagged, worn, down lady companion whom she had engaged within the last month was directed to write notes respecting the sudden illness of the countess to the expected guests, and at eight o'clock her ladyship started from Euston for the north.

It was early morning, dark and windy, the moon had set, and the sun had not risen, when she arrived at Penniston, but the moonless sky, like a sea of ink over head, was nothing gloomy to this woman. She hired a carriage and drove to Cumberton.

The sun had risen, and the snow was falling in blinding sheets when her carriage drove through the avenue of Cumberton. The blinds were all down, but her coachman thundered at the door, and after a time, Joe appeared on the threshold and gave admittance to the tall, fierce eyed lady in black velvet.

"Light a fire instantly," she said, addressing the naturally independent Joe, "and call up your master, and hurry with breakfast, slow fool."

She was savage with hunger, and unrest, fatigue and the anxieties of her horrid passion. Had she held a whip in her hand, she would inevitably have laid it about the ears of Joe.

"Slow fool," he repeated to himself, looking askance at the lady! "well I'll never forget that." Nor did he.

Rokewood was amazed on being aroused with the news that his niece had arrived. He hastily put on his clothes and rushed into the dining-room, where Joe was already blowing up a great fire, and where the countess, leaning back in a chintz covered chair, and loaded with cloaks and wraps, grumbled at the bitter cold of the north mountains, at the slowness of Joe, at the gloomy aspect of the house, at the meagreness of the furniture. Rokewood, unshorn and haggard, his grizzled hair unbrushed and uncombed came towards the now-pale and worn looking woman with a scarcely polite greeting. A more evil looking couple it were difficult to meet with.

"There, that fire will do now," said Rokewood; "go out and light another, and boil coffee and milk; rouse the cook, and tell her to fry salmon, boil eggs, make toast, send in the venison pie, and the roast pheasant cold. Both were untouched yesterday."

"I am starved," said the countess, when Joe was gone; "but that is nothing. We will warm ourselves while we wait for breakfast."

"What on earth brings you up here in Cumberton at this hour, without servants," asked Rokewood testily. "I tell you, the countess of Monkhouse, will set people talking of you. This is a grim business to manage, a very grim, and I have all the responsibility of it. I did not want you here. The girl now finds herself a prisoner again all at once. Mrs. Macray is in Paris; and wrote her word last night (at least she received the letter last night) that Viola lies at the point of death, is quite unconscious, and given up by the doctors." The wicked Rokewood chuckled as he spoke. "That is cleverly done, business," he added.

"Go on," cried the countess. "I wish to hear of Norah."

"Well, she is distracted, and sits weeping in her chamber, suddenly Madame Diana forbids her leaving it. We are afraid of her flying away to her sister. The end of this week is fixed for the attack."

Lady Monkhouse started to her feet. "It must not be. I have come here to save the girl's life. She must even inherit the fortune of Viola—yes, she must live!"

Rokewood stared at the countess in profound amazement. "Are you growing good and scrupulous," he asked?

"I have a reason," she answered, striding about the room in her excitement. "I will not tell you, because you would oppose me, but to attain my object I would hew you down with an axe if you stood in my way," and she set her teeth savagely.

He stared at her in yet deeper astonishment. "You are simply mad," he said coldly.

"Well, yes, I am," she said, folding her hands to-

gether behind her back, and looking at him with her great wild eyes. "Can you tell me where Hammond Danvers is?" Her voice shook in spite of herself, as she pronounced his name. "I mean Norah's lover?"

"Oh, yes. He managed to gain admittance to Glan Flodden most impudently under false pretences. Did I not write you word?" asked Rokewood, with a cold laugh. "I thought I had told you. It must have slipped my memory."

"Tell me, tell me," cried the maddened woman in a choked voice. "I must hear it all."

Thereupon Rokewood informed her that the woman at the lodge-gate had told him how that a handsome young man, who owned to being the lover of Norah, had come there and given her five pounds to let him into the house, which she had done, knowing the lady was not there, after that Joe was missed, and it was conjectured that he had guided the lover to Glan Flodden. Subsequent inquiry had led to the knowledge that a gentleman, calling himself Mr. Hammond, had introduced himself to Macray as a money-lender's clerk; he had even been invited to pass the night in the house. Communications from the men of business informed the squire that he had been tricked, but whether Norah had had any private conversation with him was not known.

The effect of this news upon the countess was frightful. Her cheeks grew red as blood, her lips white as death, her eyes blazed, her white face was painted by passion, until she looked like an incarnate fiend.

"Hussey, wretch, little demon!" she said.

Other names she called sweet Norah, but we will not write them here.

"He must be in this neighbourhood," she said, between her shut teeth. "Where is he?"

"It does not matter; the young lady, under the keeping of Madame Diana, cannot get out," said Rokewood.

"But I tell you I will seek him," she said, stamping her foot. Him—him; where is he?"

"How should I know!" cried Rokewood, with an oath; "this vile Joe pleads stupidity, but he is coming in with the breakfast things, and I advise you to be on your guard."

"He will know where Hammond is," cried the countess; doubtless he is in his pay."

Joe came in loaded with the breakfast things.

The countess turned upon him, cunning as a fox, stealthy as a cat, cruel as a tigress.

"Give me the address of my particular friend, Mr. Hammond, whom you piloted to Glan Flodden House," she said, with emphasis.

Alas for the poor Cumberland lad, for one moment his shrewdness failed him.

"Yauworth Village, White Leopard Inn," he said, and the moment the words were spoken he could have bitten his tongue out in spite, shame, and self-reproach.

The countess burst into a loud laugh, a wild yell, half-exultation, half-passionate rage.

"Close to her, close to her," she muttered, when Joe was gone; "but I—I will be close to him also. I will visit him at the White Leopard, this mountain village. Have you a carriage and horses?" she asked Rokewood.

"Mine I sent back to Penniston; it was hired. And where do you mean to go?"

"To Yauworth—to the White Leopard," she answered.

"You are mad!" said Rokewood.

"I shall be mad," she said, getting up; "if you don't order my carriage and horses, and send a man—not yonder clown to drive me to Yauworth. I must see this Danvers."

"To what purpose?" he asked.

"You are right," she said, speaking low and looking down gloomily on the pattern of the old carpet as if she read riddles there; "there can be nothing done without help." She looked up suddenly: "Where are Chippenham and the others?" she cried.

"Good heavens! Would you be seen about with them? Remember what they have to do next week. Next week all England will be prating of the deed. Is the woman possessed?"

"Do you think," she asked, "that if those men were discovered they would spare you?"

"Who would believe them?" he asked, in reply.

"True so far, but remember we count on their not being taken."

"I tell you I want their aid; I want them at the White Leopard. Let them be written for; let them come from Penniston with a hired carriage; hire it for two days; I will go disguised, not as the Countess of Monkhouse. Let these servants suppose me ill in bed."

"What is your game?" he asked, sternly. "For heaven's sake eat your breakfast, and don't stare like a maniac."

"You would laugh me to utter scorn did I tell you what I have in my heart," she replied.

"You have no heart," he retorted, with a laugh.

"Nay, I am beautiful," she said, musingly. "Men have ever told me that I was beautiful. I may even win him in time, though I have passed the years of youth."

"You talk like a maniac," repeated Rokewood. "Are you feverish, that you eat nothing and mutter like one in a dream?"

"I will eat," cried the countess, sitting down before the well-spread breakfast-table; "but while I eat you must contrive some means to bring the three men who linger at Penniston 'for orders' here at once. I must go with them disguised to Yauworth, to the White Leopard. I must have speech with Hammond Danvers."

"To what purpose? What is he to you? I tell you the girl, when she least expected it, was suddenly put under strict surveillance, her chamber is locked, it will not be unlocked till the Christmas snow has whitened the hills, if you want a poetical illustration, and something tells me that you are strangely in the mood for heroics just now."

The countess eat heartily when once she began. She afterwards announced her intention of going to sleep until the afternoon.

"You have a scanty supply of servants here, it seems to me," she said, with a cold smile, to Rokewood; "but it is best to practise economy. Send Granger to light the fire in the best bedroom. Granger is here, I suppose?"

"Granger is here, and very much out of sorts at the seclusion of this life. We could not trust her with all, and I judged it best she should remain here. The woman grows pale at the mention of death. She has not the remotest notion how bold our schemes are."

"Few have the courage, the daring of Chippenham," said the countess, musingly. "I count entirely on him; but, perhaps, my plans and yours differ a little just now." She smiled bitterly and grimly. "Let me write to Chippenham, while Granger lights my fire. Joe might not post the letter aright if we send him with it to the post in Gratton Village. Will you ride out and post it, uncle?"

"Through the snow?" he asked. "Well, yes, if the business be really important, which you seem to say it is."

Lady Monkhouse wrote the letter to Anthony Chippenham, directing it to the little, low ale-house in Penniston, where he stayed.

Rokewood posted the letter, and the next morning arrived that vulgar wretch in whose odious guardianship we left poor Lady Viola several chapters back. Chippenham was ostentatiously dressed. He wore a large, white, warm overcoat, a broad-brimmed, white hat, a heavy gold chain dangled from his button-hole. He looked stout, insolent, well fed; evidently he was in good pay, in excellent circumstances. When he entered the dining-room at Cumberlandton, at about ten o'clock in the morning, he found a fire lighted, the breakfast spread, Mr. Rokewood crackling the *Times*, which the mounted postman had just brought from Penniston, and the countess standing near the chimney-piece, a cup of coffee in her hand.

How shall we describe that extraordinary and unnaturally wicked woman? She looked beautiful on the cold, bright morning, when all the country lay sheeted in snow, and the hills stood like white giants against the faint blue sky, for it was a lovely day, a glorious winter day, exhilarating and health-giving. The countess had long ago slept off the fatigues of her journey from London, and now she looked handsome, piquant, attractive in the extreme.

Coarse Anthony Chippenham admired her immensely. He knew nearly all her dark secrets. He suspected shrewdly that she was a false countess, but he thought her the prettiest woman he knew.

Lady Monkhouse wore walking skirts of rich black satin, glossy as jet, over these a tight-fitting black velvet pelisse, trimmed with white ermine. On her head a hat of black velvet, bound with white ermine. Her rich hair was festooned into a magnificent structure at the back, a splendid golden chain hung from her waist, which was clasped with a gorgeous and priceless ruby button, as large as a crown piece. A ruby brooch and earrings set off the lines of her brilliant red and white complexion, her black eyebrows, and scarlet lips. "I am ready," she said, flashing a look at odious Chippenham, "and I hope you will not linger long, Anthony. Fortify yourself with brandy, and take good sandwiches in your pockets. Are your comrades with you?"

"Yes, my lady," said Anthony.

"Well, I wish to conceal my name from them. Is the carriage near the gates?"

"Half a mile lower down, as you requested, my lady."

Rokewood rose to his feet and laughed. "What

scheme my lady has on hand, I know not, Chippenham," he said.

"Anthony, I have plenty of money with me," said Lady Monkhouse; "if I gain my ends I will give you one thousand pounds to-morrow."

Rokewood stared aghast.

Anthony made her a deep bow.

Preliminaries over, the countess started with Chippenham, reached the carriage, when one of the accomplices acted as coachman, and the other as footman out of livery. Chippenham took his place inside with Lady Monkhouse, and after a charming drive through the fresh winter air they reached the little picturesque village of Yauworth, and drove straight to the White Leopard, a small quaint inn, much frequented by mountain tourists in summer time.

"Bait the horses," said the countess to the man on the box. "Mr. Chippenham and I will descend and lunch. Wait patiently in the coffee room, if they have one here."

And she entered the inn, ordered a private room, a fire, and hot lunch for two.

Anthony had no objection to the hot lunch, or the warm brandy, but he watched the countess in blank amazement. She could neither eat, sit still, or stand still. She walked up and down the little room like a caged lioness. Presently she sprang to the bell and rang it violently.

A rosy, smiling servant answered the summons.

"Is a Mr. Hammond staying at this inn?" asked Lady Monkhouse.

"Yes, ma'am, and this morning he was married to the most beautiful young lady you ever saw. She slipped out ever so early this morning from Squire Macray's, and Parson Redman married them; they are in the next room. They say his name is Danvers."

The girl was a southerner, more talkative than are the Cumberland lasses to strangers.

Lady Monkhouse grew as white as the snow outside on the mountain roads, but she was perfectly silent. She even managed to smile.

"Lunch," she said, after a pause, and the servant withdrew.

Hammond, unconscious as an infant, sat in the next room with his adored bride. Their plans were laid. Norah had escaped the vigilance of Madame Diana. As soon as the house became a prison she resolved to leave it; a small parcel containing a few clothes, a box, with her jewels, were all she had brought.

The sympathies of the whole Cumberland village were with the married lovers, and they feared now neither Rokewood nor his creatures. That night had to be passed at the Leopard, and next day bride and bridegroom were to start for London, and to go on to France to the sick bed of Viola.

"Have the carriage and horses down in the road that overlooks the railway," said Lady Monkhouse, to Chippenham; "at twilight I will come to you there."

Hammond and Norah had partaken of an early dinner. Just as twilight fell the rosy servant came and announced to Hammond that a lady, calling herself Mrs. Peters, wished to speak privately to him.

"She says sir, she is an old friend of your mother's. She is going on to Carlisle to-night in her private carriage."

"My mother had a friend a Mrs. Peters?" mused Hammond, who had told Lady Monkhouse this during his illness! "but she would be an old lady."

"This is not an old lady sir, a very handsome lady." "It is strange," said Hammond, "where is this woman?"

"She is outside sir, her carriage is gone on. She only wants to speak a few words."

Norah rose up and clasped her husband's arm.

"Don't go," she said; "it is a trick do not leave me."

"I won't leave you," he said passionately. "You shall come with me, but why won't the lady walk upstairs?"

"She says she could not air, and she must see you alone."

"I will just run down," said Hammond, "it is some folly of course, but the night is too cold for you, so wait my love here by the fire, and Bessie will make some famous tea and toast." "I will be back in five minutes."

"He was in such ecstasy of good spirits, he kissed her so rapturously, he ran down the stairs so lightly and she half laughing, half afraid, returned to the little sofa and the little fire."

Five minutes past ten, a quarter-of-an-hour, an hour, two hours. The landlord and his men went out with lanterns and shouts after the missing bridegroom. Norah sank upon the ground in the sitting-room in a tearful agony. Had he deserted her? Had he been murdered?

"Oh, may heaven pity me, and take me to himself," she murmured. "My sorrow is greater than I can bear."

(To be continued.)



[THE DOWAGER'S THREAT.]

THE DOWAGER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER IX.

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard, their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

COUNT SCHEFFER did not take his departure from Grafenstein House, although he had come in the train of the princess, and etiquette seemed to require he should do so when that noble lady left Munich. The dowager frowned, and sneered, and openly wondered, but the imperturbable gentleman still presented himself daily, either at the dinner-table or in the drawing-room, and always came to the suites of rooms allotted to him at some hour of the night.

"Do you always leave your estate without a master?" asked the dowager one day, with a very perceptible sneer.

The count bowed gracefully, but she caught a steel glitter from his bright blue eyes.

"Indeed, your ladyship, the poor old place was so unmercifully cheated out of its mistress, that it has quite lost its interest in the master also. Pray, spare yourself any uneasiness about its prosperity. It is very good of you, but it is really uncalled for."

The count found occasion to follow the Baroness Hildegard to her little parlour soon after, and he spoke promptly:

"Your ladyship knows, I trust, that I have no wish to intrude upon the real mistress of this house," said he; "the innocuous of the Dowager Baroness Grafenstein fall from me as harmlessly as a shower of dry leaves; but if I am also unwelcome to your ladyship, it is quite another affair."

"You know very well that it is not so, Count Scheffer," spoke the baroness, hastily; "and I also understand that there is some powerful under motive for your stay here. Remain, I beg of you. I am exceedingly annoyed by her incivility to you. I have been thinking, to-day, that I should send at once and bring a party of guests into the house whose presence will protect you from her sneers, and will also cover your visit here from invidious remark."

"It will be an excellent idea. I thank your ladyship, heartily. It is useless for me to attempt to hide from you that I have a motive for this persistent intrusion, the highest, most earnest motive that can actuate a man," and as he paused the count looked

down into the fair face and smiled brightly, "the hope of being able to repeat an old story, and of winning a happiness which no one shall disturb. Little Hildegard, do you know what a wrong and foolish thing you did when you promised the dowager, by her son's coffin, that you would never marry again without her consent?"

The baroness started nervously.

"You know it! Oh, it was horrible, but I could not help it. I was overborne by her imperious will. But she did not, could not mean anything by it. She will not refuse her consent when she knows my happiness is concerned."

"Will she not?" returned the count with bitter emphasis; "is it possible you are so slow to learn that woman's nature? Hildegard, Hildegard. She taunted me with it the other day. She said you had taken a solemn oath to obey her will in regard to marriage, and that she would die on the rack before she would consent to see you my wife. She said that you would never dare to disobey her, and I knew that she was right. And so I have set myself a task. She shall learn that there are other wills as strong as her own, and some circumstances that will break any will, however stubborn."

The baroness sighed drearily, and said in a faltering voice:

"It frightens me to see what is going on between you. It is all so strange and mysterious. You are watching her, and she is watching you, and I cannot help following the looks and gestures, and every movement of you both; and the more I see, the more I am bewildered and distressed. Why do you think she would care to molest that innocent girl? And what reason has she to insist that you know what undiscovered fate has overtaken her?"

She lifted her eyes to his, and looked into his face with earnest inquiry.

The count coloured, and bit his lip nervously, and then bending down suddenly, he said, with a voice thrilling richly with tenderness:

"Dearest Hildegard, is it too much for me to ask you to trust all this to me—to cease from this disquietude, and believe that I shall do my best to work out the most beneficial solution?"

I said I would win you yet, and no obstacles or mysteries shall daunt me."

The Baroness Hildegard pushed back the loose waves of hair and looked up with dreamy, questioning eyes.

"Ah," said she "the mysteries—that is just of what I am afraid, whither will they lead you?"

"To the marriage altar," replied he gaily; "give me Godspeed, fair Hildegard."

She smiled also, despite her perplexity and doubting, but remained silent.

"Give me Godspeed," he persisted. "Hildegard, Hildegard, it is idle for you to refuse to understand me. Tell me what your own heart will answer, regardless of outside influence, if I come to you again, suing for that fair hand of yours."

He bent down and looked eagerly into her eyes, which dropped slowly beneath the ardent glow of his. But the baroness was silent.

"Will you give me no answer?" said he reproachfully. She looked up now, a rich glowing colour drifting into her cheeks, a glad hope sparkling in her eyes.

"Yes," said she, "Oscar, it is right that I should tell you the truth. When you come, thus I shall give you a woman's loving welcome."

He bent still lower, took her hand and lifted it respectfully to his lips.

"Now, indeed, I am inspired to work earnestly, and am clad in invincible armour for the battle. I shall speedily come to you shouting the cry of victory," he said gaily.

At that moment, while yet he held her white hand in his, and both faces were glowing with tender joy, the dowager baroness pushed open the door, and stood upon the threshold looking in upon them with fierce and wrathful eyes.

The Baroness Hildegard coloured deeply, and nervously withdrew her hand, but the count, bowing again, flashed a defiant, triumphant glance into the angry face before he withdrew, and left the two women together.

"Hildegard," exclaimed the dowager, "what has that man been saying to you?"

Her daughter-in-law looked at her imploringly, and tried vainly to articulate an answer.

"You are like a frightened child, detected in guilt," continued the other angrily. "I do not need an answer. You have listened willingly to his idle vows of love, you allowed him to kiss your hand. You have encouraged him in false hopes, hopes which will never, shall never be realized—yon, the wife of the dead baron, the mother of the future master of Grafenstein. Shame upon you! recant to your solemn vow, your holiest duty!"

"Madam!" exclaimed the younger woman, roused at length to the defence of her own dignity, "such language is unbecoming to you, and insulting to me. I have done nothing for which I need to hang my head; I am no guilty child, although your fierce anger for a moment disconcerted and frightened me. What right, indeed, have you to call me to account in this fashion?"

Her words only increased the dowager's anger until it was almost a maniac's fury.

"What right! what right?" repeated she, hissing out the words in a tone which sent the blood shudderingly back to the listener's heart; "defiant girl, have you forgotten your vow?"

The Baroness Hildegarde turned ashy pale, and clasped her hands imploringly.

"You will never be so cruel as to enforce it. Oh, it would be heartless, pitiless! You took advantage of my weakness, under the awe of that solemn scene. You said it would only be for my good, that you would always consider that. You deceived me; it is not right that such a vow should bind me," she exclaimed passionately.

The dowager's lip curled.

"A vow is a vow. Do you not know that it was registered? Dare you brave Heaven's displeasure by its violation? Yes, it was a solemn scene. You have not forgotten it. You stood by the cold, still form of your dead husband, his babe in your arms, and one hand you laid upon that cold hand which crossed his pulseless breast, and then and there you repeated the words after me, and gave to this spirit hovering over that pale clay, your solemn oath to protect his honour, and give your first thoughts to the welfare of the child. You swore, calling down Heaven's vengeance upon your head if you proved false. You solemnly swore that you would never marry again unless I gave my blessing to your union. Speak, tell me if you have forgotten that truly solemn scene?"

The beautiful face of the daughter-in-law was deadly pale, her soft, dark eyes had a glare of horror, a shudder shook her from head to foot.

"No, I have not forgotten," she gasped, "but surely when I tell you that Count Scheffer loves me, has always loved me since I was a careless girl, that he has won my trusting affection, and asks me to be his wife, surely you will be noble and generous enough to give your consent, and so save me from violating my vow."

"Never, never!" hissed the dowager, her dark face almost fiendish in its rage; "do you think the Grafenstein hawk will tolerate the Scheffer dove in the old nest? I tell you the two can never live together in peace. Your first duty is to your child, and I tell you the deadliest peril menaces him through Count Scheffer."

"I will not believe it," returned the other indignantly. "The count loves Max, and is fond of him. He will only help me to love and protect my darling."

The dowager stamped her foot, and wrenched the thin handkerchief she had been holding in one hand into two parts, with the sudden, wrathful clenching of her fingers. As she flung away the pieces, she said in a deep and vengeful voice:

"Love and protection, which will ruin you both in name and fortune and honour. I tell you I will see you both laid in my son's grave before I consent to such a thing. Do not cheat yourself with any hope of my yielding to such an insane wish, for I tell you now, it will never, never be!"

The burning fierceness of the eyes showed the same inexorable will as the pitiless hardness of the voice.

The youthful baroness looked at her in dreary conviction of the uselessness of further appeal to her compassion, upon which the strange woman smiled triumphantly.

"You believe me at last," she said.

"Yes," returned Hildegarde, bitterly! "I believe that there is no mercy or softness in your nature; but I will still hope that Oscar may be able to find a way to break even such an iron will as yours."

"And you will help him?" cried she.

"Yes," returned the Baroness Hildegarde, a slow flush crossing her pale face, her eyes glittering with indignant feeling; "yes, to the utmost extent of my ability I will help him, for I love him now, as I loved him once before—before your treacherous machinations came between us and made a way for your son."

A pitiless grip seized her arm almost before the last words were articulated, a pair of lurid eyes blazed into hers, a wild, shrill whisper hissed into her ear:

"Fool! poor fool! you do not know what you dare when you defy me! You do not guess upon what a thin lava crust your feet are standing, and that a single blow from me can send you down into the boiling gulf below. Are you ready to face ruin, dishonour, disgrace? to stand before the world, to be pointed at by the finger of scorn? you and your boy; tell me are you ready for that?"

The Baroness Hildegarde wrenched herself away, though the effort left a cruel imprint on her arm, and turned upon her, with eyes flashing and bosom heaving with outraged pride, and head thrown back haughtily.

"It can never be!" she returned, with fierce impetuosity; "the ruin of fortune may come, but disgrace, dishonour, cannot touch a person but from their own deeds. I tell you, I have kept my life pure and honourable; my father died an upright man, honoured for his integrity and his virtue; I have no brothers, no sisters; my husband is dead, my son yet a mere babe. How dare you try to frighten me with such an absurd threat? I can defy dishonour or disgrace to lay its blighting touch upon me."

The dowager smiled scornfully.

"So immaculate! A worthy bride, indeed, for Count Scheffer!"

And then she bent down and whispered something in the other's ear which took fearful and deadly effect upon the listener's brain, for the great dark eyes dilated with a look of unutterable horror and distress, and Hildegarde sprang away with a wild, sobbing cry.

"No, no, not that! It is too horrible, too terrible!"

And she hid her blanched face in her trembling hands.

"Foolish child!" returned the other sternly; "will you any longer rebel at my wise and safe control? Leave Count Scheffer's suit to my settlement and content yourself with your love for Max."

"Where is Max; let me go to him," murmured the Baroness Hildegarde, dearly.

"Go! Nothing hinders your devotion to him. This black shadow must stand back until I allow it to come forward. Do you see now, why my authority is absolute, and cannot be defied, without ruin and disgrace coming to overwhelm you?"

"I want Max," said the sobbing mother, walking blindly and fatteringly to the door.

Count Scheffer with arms folded sternly across his breast, was pacing to and fro along the end of the corridor. He turned around quickly at the sound of her footsteps, and sprang towards her in sorrowful and indignant sympathy, at his first glimpse of her white, anguished face.

"Hildegarde! is heaven's name what has that woman said to you? Do not be frightened, do not be distressed. I swear to you I will thwart and baffle her."

A scornful laugh from the threshold, drew his eyes to where the dowager stood, her dark face lighted up in fierce exultation.

"I have only told her that the suit of the noble Count Scheffer is hopeless."

"It is false, it is not hopeless," retorted he, clenching his hands and wishing so fiercely, that it was a man and not a woman, standing there taunting him.

"Tell him, Hildegarde," spoke the dowager, in a voice of cold authority.

"Yes, yes, it is idle for you to hope; oh, Oscar, do not struggle any longer against inexorable fate," moaned Hildegarde.

"Inexorable fiend!" exclaimed the count, his blue eyes darting their lightning beams. "I do not accept that woman yonder for my fate. Hildegarde, only say that when I crush down her opposition you will give me a favourable answer, and it is all I ask."

"She dare not say it," sneered the dowager.

The Baroness Hildegarde shuddered, drew herself out of his clasp and turned away, but the count caught at her hand and detained her.

"Speak Hildegarde," said he, in a gentle, imploring voice, "give me this due, at least. Tell her that you give your knight Godspeed on his quest, and that the guardian of his success will be this fair hand, and the tender heart that guides its movements."

"Oh, Oscar, if I thought it was possible for you to win, I would wear the very marble before our chapel altar with my knees, ceaselessly bowing there in petition for your success. But it is hopeless. Oh, be warned that it is hopeless!"

"No, nothing is hopeless, not even death," answered the count, "trust me, rather than the cruel woman yonder. I charge you, dearest Hildegarde, to keep your faith in me, and to put away this anguish which has already wrought such mischief with your health. I will come to you victorious, and snatch you out of the dreamy grandeur of this unblest home, to peace and gladness. I promise you solemnly that I will. Until then farewell."

He lifted her hand to his lips, led her across the corridor to her parlour door, and then turned to the dark, wrathful figure which still watched him.

"The dove defies the hawk, dowager," said he.

CHAPTER X.

I will advise you where to plant yourselves; Acquaint you with the perfect sky of the time The moment on't, for't must be done to-night.

Resolve yourselves apart, I'll come to you anon.

FRAU HELVER sat at her window, stitching away at the work which was so constantly renewed

that one would think each new garment must have seemed like a monotonous page in an endless volume, and as she sewed, she sighed dolefully, and croned to herself in an old woman's fashion.

"Alack-a-day! this is a weary world, and awful things come to pass in it, and the Lord does not hinder. Woe is me! I did not think I had set my heart so fondly on her bright, young face. I never knew how much it was to me, her running in and out, with that merry laugh of hers, and the brightsome smile. The Lord gave us all! it is a curious feeling to stop and try to think what has become of her—how it may be with her now."

She shivered as she said it, and crossed herself, and then fell to work again, setting the stitches with nervous haste, but a moment after, she burst out again with increased vehemence, dropping the work into her lap.

"Oh, if I could come across that woman again! I would tear out her eyes, but I would know whether she had anything to do with it or not. How I look for her every time I go out into the street. If I could find her, if I could only find her before it is too late. Kind Herr Wohler is dwindling and dwindling into a shadow; his grief is killing him as fast as the deadliest disease could. And Gotthart's face is more and more like the angels to whom he is going, and Konrad—sometimes I think I pity him most of all, because his body is so strong and vigorous that it shaves off all the trouble to be borne by his mind, and that is harassed and racked full enough, as one may read by his eyes. Poor little Tess! it would have been better for them all, if you had never tried that beautiful voice of yours."

And even while her thoughts were thus going over all the unhappy circumstances, there came a knock at her door, and Meenart, Count Scheffer's detective, presented himself.

"My good woman, I have come to ask your help. A carriage is waiting—will you go with me to take a look at a woman we vaguely suspect may be the visitor here on that eventful evening which so mysteriously swallowed up the little singing girl?"

Frau Helver threw down her work, and seized upon her shawl with alacrity.

"Will I go, indeed? I think I should be willing to cross the great ocean if I could only help to find her. Who is the woman? do you know her name?"

"Possibly; but that is of little account now. Of course she is not to suspect your object. I must manage, somehow, that you hear her speak. You are confident that you shall recognise her voice?"

"Yes, I am sure about the voice. Come, I am ready; why do you wait?" she said, pinning her shawl, with fingers that were trembling so much as to be hardly capable of accomplishing their object.

"Nay," said he, smiling; "you must be a little more composed. Remember that, after all, we may be entirely mistaken in our suspicions, and that your excitement will be likely to disturb an innocent person, as well as put the guilty one upon her guard. I confess that I have no faith in the likelihood of getting a clue. It seems too astounding; but the count will have the experiment tried. Only fancy this a common business transaction. You are going to obtain work of a grand lady."

"I'll do my best, but I own I'm a good deal flustered," returned she, meekly.

"Let us look in a moment into Herr Wohler's room," said he kindly, as they descended the stairs.

"The lord have mercy! it's a dreary place now," said Frau Helver, in a tremulous voice.

But she knocked at the door softly, and in response to Gotthart's summons, pushed it open and entered, followed by Meenart.

The boy was alone, bending his pale face down to his desk and the unfinished picture there. His great blue eyes glistened, as he recognised the detective.

"You bring tidings?" he said, eagerly.

"Alas, not yet," replied Meenart compassionately, "but I have come for a little of Frau Helver's help, and there is a possibility of a clue."

"The possibilities have all vanished so, the moment any one attempts to seize them," sighed Gotthart, "that my heart sickens at each new hope; but Heaven send, Frau Helver, that you bring us success."

"I ought," returned the woman, in keen self-reproach; "since it may be that my idle chattering helped along this trouble. Now, I pray you, let us be gone. I am steady and calm, and will do my best."

Meenart walked with her around the corner to the next street, and there a cabriolet was waiting. They got in, and the driver seemed to understand the whole affair, for, without a single question, he mounted to his place, and drove at a steady, but not conspicuously swift pace, to one of the first jewellery estab-

Hshments in the town. There they paused, and Meenart hastily assisted his companion to alight, and passing into a narrow rear alley, was admitted through a private door into a small room filled with massive safes, bricked in on either side. Count Scheffer was there, waiting for them. He looked anxious, but his eye shone with steady fire. He bowed respectfully to Frau Helver, laying his finger on his lip with a significant smile, and motioned her to a seat, which gave a look into another room, a sort of parlour, carpeted and luxuriously furnished, though of tiny dimensions. There was a window between them, which was defended by a painted screen of fine wire which served faithfully for a curtain, until the eye was placed close upon it, when it betrayed its trust. At this window they seated Frau Helver, who did her best to conceal the trepidation which sent the heart-beats fluttering into her throat.

"When you hear voices, madam, we wish you to look closely through the window, and to do your best towards a certain identification," whispered the count.

A silent nod was the only reply she gave, and then she turned her face again to the window, and looked through, fixing her eyes on a pretty statuette which stood on a bracket just opposite the window, until the graceful Clyte seemed to warm and glow into a living creature beneath the steady gaze. They waited there, in this expectant silence, half-an-hour, and it seemed interminable to the count and to the nervous seamstress. The detective, however, used by his eventful experience to conquer impatience, sat cool and quiet, perusing the columns of a newspaper he had pulled out from his pocket.

All at once, however, there came the sound of voices and an opening door. The count reached out his hand, and seized that of the toilworn needlewoman, and gave it a warning pressure. She never turned her head, but her eager eyes dropped from the marble Clyte to the living figure which emerged slowly to view, followed by the deferential partner of the wealthy business house, and devoured every lineament of the dark, haughty face, every attitude of the tall, straight figure, draped in glistening sable satin, as it sank listlessly into the velvet arm-chair.

"I have endeavoured to fulfil your ladyship's wishes," said the jewel merchant, in his bland voice. "You will perceive that I have provided a very superior article as substitute for the gems. Not one person in fifty, at any public exhibition, will suspect that they are not true jewels, especially when they are in this costly setting, and worn by your ladyship or your daughter-in-law."

"The affair has nothing to do with my daughter-in-law," returned the lady, coldly. "The ornaments are mine, and when I have done with them, they will go to my grandson. Keep the diamonds, and I may shortly send you back these false stones to be ousted, and give place to the rightful gems. They are, indeed, admirable counterfeits."

She bent over the casket which he had placed on the table before her, and lifted out a necklace and diadem, playing them to and fro in the light, and carelessly watching the shimmer.

Count Scheffer's face had paled beneath the intense solicitude he felt, and he watched Frau Helver's face with keen and eager eyes, while the deep, peculiar tones of that proud voice broke upon her ears. He saw her shut her eyes presently and listen, evidently with every faculty diverted to her ear, and he gnawed impatiently at his lip and clenched his hands, to give some vent to the fierceness of his suspense.

(To be continued.)

THE Hanley Burgess roll this year contains the names of 398 females; that of Newcastle-under-Lyme has 84 females, and that of Congleton 207.

M. THIERS has lost his mother-in-law, Madame Dosne, a lady of great intellect, and one who possessed in an eminent degree the almost lost *art de causer* for which the *salons* of France were once so remarkable.

THE young King of Greece has gratified his Jewish subjects in Corfu by being present at their synagogue during worship. The Ark was opened as the King took his seat on a throne, and the Rabbi called on Heaven to rain blessings on the head of the King and his son.

THE TOMB OF HENRY VII.—The well-known central monument in the chapel of Henry VII., Westminster Abbey, has been cleansed and revived. The tomb itself is seen to be of black marble; the effigies and other metal adjuncts are gilt. The gilding is for the most part in an excellent state of preservation. The subjects of the sculptured groups in the circular panels round the tomb are now obvious, and the inscription is legible. The dark metal screen around the tomb would prevent its newly-restored brightness from interfering with the sombre har-

mony of the chapel as a whole, even were that brightness more garish than it is. Nothing has yet been done to the screen; but doubtless it will be cleaned, and the small portions that are gilt brought out. Looking at the tolerably complete appearance of the monument at first sight, it is somewhat startling to hear that 1,500 pieces are wanted to make it perfect, yet such is we believe the case.

ISABEL.

I AM mad. So the keeper told me this morning. This is a mad-house. He did not tell me that. I had no need to ask him. I hear the raving lunatics every hour. My blood chills, even in the sultry air of this hot summer's day, at their mingled wolf-like howlings and screeches—men and women—wild, tearing mad. And I am one of them! There is the Prince of Darkness—as he will have himself called by all who have to do or speak with him. Little need of his fancy to that title. He'll find it a reality, full soon enough.

My laugh at my own joke brought a spectator to my grated door. How I hate her—that still, silent-eyed woman, with her exquisite, straight nose and immaculate features. She is handsome. But she does not seem to care. Strange for a woman. Her cold, blue eyes remind me, oh, how much, of one whom I used to know—aye, and love; yea, love! to the last drop of my soul's essence.

She is looking at me—that woman—as I write here. She is the keeper's sister. She is gone, now. She has long masses of hair that slide from her crown to her waist, like ripples of yellow water. Men call it beautiful, but to my eye it is—horrible! I shrieked, and broke my manacles once when she came into my cell. They said I was worse than a devil to tame, even after she rushed screaming from the room. How my fingers itched for a clasp at her delicate, white throat! How I laughed the feverish mocking laugh of a madman's glee as the object of my horrible aversion cowered in terror at my frenzy! But they chained me again. Verily, to me it then seemed that every hair of her head was a living snake, and all twining and coiling and wriggling together in a loathsome mass about her temples, her soft eyes, her white face and neck of alabaster.

She has passed my door again, throwing in one of her cold glances, that never meet mine with a steady look. Never has she looked me fairly in the eye since the day that I caught her glance, and then rising slowly from my table, holding her gaze in mine, I approached her. Ha! I had the most power. Her eye grew wild, and I felt the serpent's fascination grow strong within me when I knew I held her eyes as a plaything. "I will bid them leap towards me out of their sockets," I said, and lent all my magic influence in that direction,—when, with a ringing shriek, she clapped both hands over her brows, and ran screaming down the passage, while the demons in the cells opposite replied in every octave of their crazy howlings. She has just passed again. How I would love to get my fingers in that mass of yellow golden serpents she calls her hair.

There is the Prince of Darkness, again. He's at his morning devotions most of the time, lately—prolonging them a considerable way into the night. Hark! Hear him! That was a shriek a real fiend might envy. And another, and yet another ere the first has died away. Now he gnashes his teeth upon the iron gratings, and curses himself and his brother fiends in language only his own kin could understand. I hear his frightful symbols of Satanic rage, and I know that now his eyes glitter with a phosphorescent gleam, and the foam drops from his lips.

I have gathered from his ravings that he has been a murderer. A murderer! How that word grates on my ear, like the filing of a saw against your head. For me, too, it hath a meaning. I must banish it, or my wits will leave me ere my work on this scrap of paper be accomplished.

Every year that I have been confined in this cell I have bitten a notch in the sill of my window. Seventeen years ago I bit the first one in the tough oak wood. Now eight notches fill the narrow foot-sill, and nine others stretch half-way up the side-frame. How often I have ground my teeth in frenzied madness against the square bars of wrought iron that keep my clothed hand from the glass I would so gladly break! Three of these notches have been gnawed by me since the doctor told me my mania was incurable. That I might be sane at intervals, or partially so, but for the rest I was to continue a raving madman, shut up for life, here in this asylum, among the lunatics.

For months a burden has weighed my mind at these intervals of sense. I have a confession to make, I know I shall feel easier and be less violent in my madness afterwards. Now that I have demauded my paper and pens from the keeper I hardly

dare to write of the terrible past lest I break forth wild again, and the strong mon enter my cell and chain me as they have done so often. Yet I must write my story. I have determined, and I will accomplish it, sign it, seal it, and send forth, while yet in my sober moments, to relatives in the crazy world outside (for, mind you, lunacy is not totally confined within the walls of your asylums, my good benefactors of your race), who will then have the oral treatise upon the dreadful subject which for seventeen years has been the theme of the ravings of a madman.

I am now a bent and haggard man. In my face are fierce lines of agony, brought by fiendish experiences. My hair is white and kept cut short. I am wrinkled, yet I am not yet forty-two, though I look eighty, and my grey eyes burn with a cruel light, like a cold fever that racks veins and arteries.

Seventeen years ago, plus nine months, I was a far different object to gaze upon. From my youth men had called me handsome—aye, and women too. I was tall, finely proportioned, with dark hair, inclined to grow long and curl. I always dressed with elegance and taste, and grew to be called the gentleman of the Rosepeake family, for I had a brother, Joseph Rosepeake, different from me in nearly every particular. Our father had been bedridden for nine years—our mother had been long dead, and the housekeeper that took her place (for we had no sister), and had served us several years, was one of those severe and gloomy persons who believed that the essence of Christianity consisted in utter and remorseless abhorrence of vice in its mildest forms, the instant suppression of all tendency to youthful levity, however harmless and innocent in its outcroppings—who looked upon all outside her particular sect as subjects for an example of wrath. With this woman my brother was entirely popular, and I, perhaps very justly, quite the reverse. Joseph, however, staid and virtuous as he professed to be from early boyhood, was, nevertheless, a great deal of a Pharisee, and a little of a hypocrite. Thus, while my effervescent "wild oats" received reprobation, his were sown slyly, and successfully covered up, while he received all laudations at home and school, I received all the lectures and the stripes. Rather an unequally divided system of rewards and punishments to my young ideas of justice.

It was natural, that I, with my reckless truthful nature, grew up with feelings very like contempt and hate for my pale, smooth-faced shrewd-tongued brother. Our father died soon after we became of age, and by his will most of the property went to his favourite child, the good Joseph, who had grown wonderfully attentive during his last months of illness. I, the scapegrace, received only a small share of the family patrimony, which I immediately converted into money, and with bitterness in my heart against all my kin, left my native country.

I invested my money in an India estate of moderate size, and gradually began to prosper. Once, while spending a fortnight at the house of a friend I encountered her who was to prove my destiny. I knew it the moment I had cast one look at her languid voluptuous eyes, that could kindle with such wonderful emotion.

She was of Spanish descent, and more beautiful than aught else human I had ever seen. Her smile was witching to a degree, and her dimples, when she laughed outright, were like spots made by the touch of fairy Cupid fingers. She was of medium size, of elegant yet plump and luxurious form, after the Spanish mould. Her hair was wonderful. It swept her bare and perfect shoulders—exquisite as no marble reproduction could be—to her very feet, in a shimmering cloud of golden brown. Its natural colour was light auburn, but in the sunshine's rays I have seen it flash back spangles of orange-gold. Her eyes were of dark blue—peculiar for one of her extraction, yet she told me her father's were very light blue, while her mother's were the rich, torrid hue of the Andalusian girls. And here let me remark, what I have before repeated, that never yet was instance known of blue eyes and dark hair combining in the make-up of one woman's beauty when that woman was not one of those upon whose alabaster forehead and enticing cheeks should be written the word—"Danger." Beware of such women! Flee them, if you love peace of the heart.

To say that I loved the beautiful Anglo-Spaniard would be a weak speech, indeed! I longed that some power might transform her into a block of wood, or statuette of lovely marble, that I might then fall on my knees and worship her without stint, or fear of her cold silencing, yet fascinating smile.

For in spite of all my suit, and my unremitting devotion, I could, I fancied, make no more progress with the queen of beauty than men before me had done, nor around me could do. What if she smiled on me a trifle oftener or sweeter than the others? I was not satisfied with this. I loved her, and nothing

less than a return of my passion could satisfy me. My rivals took the trouble of informing me that she was a hardened coquette. I took not even the trouble of thanking them for their gratuitous warnings. There are women who gloat over their conquests, and who like the best to enjoy their triumphs in secret—who glory in the power they wield over the fools around them, whose brains they have turned to top-sy-turvy, who smile in bitter sarcasm at the depth of humility to which they can force their maddened worshippers. Such was she, in part. Yet I have since been led to know that there was in her deep nature a profound calculation of doubtful chances, a subtle shrewdness of selfish cunning, possessed by but few of her sex.

I sued for her hand. She threw into her face that momentary look of thoughtful sadness, she so well knew how to simulate. "Do you know," she said then, with an outburst that electrified me, and a gleam in her eyes that I never before saw there: "Do you know that I never had a heart? Do you know that I sometimes believe I was not made of the same clay with the rest of my species—that I have a disposition of an enticing fiend? You do not know that, though it seems to you tropical, how cold and dead and wicked my nature is, or you would never have asked me this idiotic question!"

"I care for nothing in this world or the next so you will be my wife," I said, in blind passion. "Were you the evil king's own grandchild I would marry and love you still," I continued, impudently, attempting to kiss her hand.

"This will do better another time," said she, drawing hastily back, and rising haughtily, motioning me to follow her into the garden, where further confidential intercourse would be prevented by the presence of merry friends.

But in a month's time, when I had returned disheartened, and sick of living, to my plantation, she, too, came to spend a little visit with friends who were my neighbours. Again was our intimacy renewed, and at last, by sheer persistency, I gained from her lips—not from her heart—the promise to be mine.

I was deliciously happy. Yet I knew that she did not love me one particle. But it was enough to know, for me, that I might now claim the right to protect that angel's form—to steal an occasional kiss from her lips that thrilled mine, though they thrilled not in return—to spend at least a season of my time in her society—a heaven than which I never hoped for greater.

About this time there came a summons for me home. My brother had fractured a limb, and it was feared his death must ensue speedily. In my present state of mind I was at peace with all mankind, ay, and womankind too, my poor brother and the old housekeeper included, though they were the very persons to whom three seasons before I left with such bitter feelings, and to avoid whom I had come away.

"Your brother Joseph, I think you said, had been left all, or nearly all of your father's property when he died," said Isabel, my affianced, as I sat with her the evening before I was obliged to leave for England.

"He left me barely enough to purchase the estate yonder," I replied.

"And in case your brother dies, there is no other heir," she said.

"None," I replied heedlessly.

She sat silent, thinking a few moments.

"Are you sad to-night, Isabel?" I asked, supposing for a moment she reciprocated my own unwillingness to leave her, even for a few days. "I shall return at the earliest possible moment, rest assured," I added.

"I was not thinking of that," she said quickly. "You know, dear John," she continued, using, for the first time in her life to me that endearing address; "that if you take me, as I am, and as you say you wish to, you marry a penniless woman. My property was nearly all dissipated before I came into the right of possession of the small remainder."

"I care only for you, I have enough for us both, and I am the happiest being now that you have consented to share it with me. You must suspect me of being false indeed, to intimate that there would be any difference of feeling on my side on account of the fact you have just mentioned," I replied passionately.

I was rewarded by a kiss from her ripe lips, more fervent than ever before bestowed by her. "She is not all ice—my queen of beauty—after all," I thought.

"You will gratify one caprice of mine, just to show me that you love me as much as you say you do?" she asked, with pretty hesitation.

"Certainly, darling; what is it?"

"Let me accompany you on your journey to England."

"Yes."

I might, if she had allowed me to think, have questioned the motive she had for this extraordinary

request. But what lover ever questioned the whim of her he deemed purer than the angels—a shrine almost too holy for him to be allowed to cast his lifetime of admiration at its feet. Besides, as I said, she gave my bewildered intellect no opportunity for reflection, but kept on:

"It is so far, and I shall miss you. Besides I would like to take the trip, as I have never been to England."

"She may yet learn to love me," I said to myself, as I went to my home to prepare for the trip, which, notwithstanding it led me to the sick couch of my dying brother, I deemed somehow the pleasantest of all my journeys.

This state of delightful delirium remained upon me like a magic spell of exquisite pleasure for a month after my arrival in my native country. Then my eyes were painfully opened. But I must not get in advance of my story.

My brother, on my first arrival, I found out of danger. His leg was saved; he would soon recover, but though he was likely to regain quite his natural health, and be as strong as any one, he would always, probably, be a little lame in the fractured limb. So the surgeon said, and so it proved.

During his convalescence Isabel was by his side much of the time. I liked this, for I had only kindly feelings for my poor sick brother now. And when he got out on his crutches, she was the one he seemed to prefer to lean upon, though my arm was stronger. As yet the pangs of jealousy had taken no hold of my heart, and I saw him watch her come and go with the heightened colour in his pale cheek, to which the dark rich roses in her own—which would seldom come at my bidding—responded. All this, I say, I saw; and not dreaming it meant more nor aught than a brotherly or sisterly regard and affection—which I should have grieved to have found wanting—I rejoiced that heaven had given my love to so kind, so good, so worthy a woman.

An imperative summons came, sooner than I had expected, for my immediate return to India. I read the missive to her, and suggested a return. She dissented, saying:

"You know John, dear, that you can return for me when your business is over. I do not like to leave your brother till he gets thoroughly strong. Besides, you have not yet finished out one-half your visit. You must go and then come back for me."

Idiot, that I did see it all then. How persuasive seemed her insinuating tongue. How plausible her reasons. Joseph was already able to fumble about without his crutches, and needed a nurse as little as myself had ever needed one, who had never been ill from infancy.

I left England after spending a passionate evening in Isabel's society, while my senses revelled in her beauty and my trusting heart drank in deep draughts of unalloyed love. I wrote her five letters in the two months that I was absent. She promised faithfully and promptly to reply. She only wrote me once while I was away.

A perplexed and uneasy man I was at the end of my term of absence. I had already begun to eat the fruit of the bitterness of hope deferred, which maketh the heart sick. My heart told me that there was something wrong somewhere, and I came home with the full anticipation of having an indefinable but no less terrible foreboding confirmed.

And I was not disappointed.

I crossed the threshold of my brother's dwelling—the family mansion, a portion of which at least should have been mine by virtue of primogeniture—and dismissed the cabman who had deposited my luggage. Marching through the rooms and finding no one to welcome me, I sent the little servant-maid who had admitted me to summon her mistress, the sour old housekeeper, who still brooded like a dark-winged, but ever watchful, family angel, over the domestic arena of the house.

"Good morning, madam; you perceive that I have just arrived from the steamer, so you must excuse my abruptness in entering and summoning your attention."

"Certainly, Mr. John! Certainly; you are always welcome back to your old home, I suppose," she replied. "Won't you retire to your own room, and rest and change your dress? Isabel took Ann away with her for a maid."

"Is Isabel gone, then? I observed the house appeared to be shut up, and found no one here to greet me! And Joseph, where's he?" I said, very much surprised and querulous over Isabel's curious absence.

"Why, laws-a-me!" she cried, "han't you heard. We'll, I do declare, you're the first one then as han't heered on't," she cried, holding up both her hands in a state of utter astonishment.

"I am not aware that anything unusual has happened in my absence, either to Isabel or to my brother," I said with dignity.

"Well, you'll be somewhat disappointed, I s'pose, but there aint no help but for to bear it. I'm very sorry to be the one to bring bad news. It's always an unlucky sign; but then, Mr. John, you know the sayin', 'There's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught.'"

"Madame!" I roared, angered by her cronial nonsense, for my heart already began to misgive me; "If you know anything that has happened, speak out at once, I command you, and no more trifling or insults; this is my brother's house, if you please, and not your own."

"Law! Mr. John, don't get so mad! Nothing has happened only they've gone and got married, and are off on their wedding tour—started last Saturday."

"They, who? Isabella—Joseph!" I shrieked, with a bound towards her.

"Yes, sir. Why, Mr. John, don't; you'll tear me to pieces."

The old housekeeper's look changed to terror at my frenzied actions; a moment before it had been one of malicious exultation at the agony the news seemed to cause me, breaking it as she did in her heartless way. I had placed my hands on my forehead, and reeled against the doorway for support; but now I was fierce as a tiger.

I went to my room and did not leave it for two days, during which time I took no nourishment, and the housekeeper meanwhile fled the house, having conceived for me a sudden and salutary measure of respect, which I am happy to say was lasting. I ground my teeth in rage, and paced my floor for eight and forty hours. Then I lay down and fell asleep. I dreamed that my terrible shock had made me mad. That I was an inmate of a madhouse, a companion of the insane. I shudder as I write now to think how true has since proved that awful dream, and I start again, as I am almost defensed by another yell from the Prince of Darkness, and the sound of his gnashing teeth against the iron bars of his cage.

Does intuition ever freight our sleeping fancies with warning admonitions of our future being? Let facts answer for those who have seen and experienced, and let the overwise trust for once the word of a dreamer and a seer, though he be, as the world say—mad!

The effects of my dream were peculiar. So vivid was the impression upon my senses that I feared an actual and speedy realisation of its augury. So, in sheer terror of immediate mental affliction I determinedly shut my great sorrow from my mind, or thought I did. My plans of revenge were all dropped, and I prepared to return to India, and ne'er again have aught to do with those who styled themselves friends.

Would to heaven that I had done so, but the very day before I was to start the bridal party returned. Isabel evidently expected to meet me, and evidently, too, she relied on her great power over me to subdue my passions, which she justly fancied might explode themselves. Joseph stood as though he expected violence.

Isabel, the moment on entering the house, ran up to me, and putting both arms about my neck, kissed me. The ruse of the artful woman worked with cruel success. I was completely disarmed. Had I meditated violence I could not have executed it. I was like a child in her dainty hands. She could mould my temper as she willed with a look or caress. I knew it, felt it, and felt, too, my degradation; but she was my evil genius, and I felt incapable of aught like resistance. Still I kept the outward semblance of quiet disdain. How silly this, when I knew she looked me through and through like a transparent book.

"Now, John, I've done a little wrong, I know, but then you know you have not me to blame. I always told you I could not love you. But I think, after all, you'll make a splendid brother-in-law, much better than a husband; and now you see I can love you as a brother, when as a husband it would have been impossible to love you at all!" she said.

"And you love Joseph better than me?" I asked. There was no baffled rage in the tone, only bitter, childish repining.

"What a question, when I married him so gladly!" said she, in her careless way, which yet meant a great deal.

She never spoke a word of the sin of breaking her solemnly plighted vows with me. The idea of iniquity never entered her mind, at least not to trouble her.

"Brother, I give you my hand. I congratulate you upon having the privilege of taking on yourself the responsibility of this woman," I said.

And heaven knows, at that moment, I meant what I said, and believed then, from the heart, as I do now from the understanding, that no more condign punishment could be visited on mortal man than the fulfilment of my words, so sublimely impious did her wicked recklessness and treachery at that moment appear to me.

They, however, were pleased to take it, as it seemed to them, a generous compliment, though Joseph for his manliness, I will say it, looked ashamed and astounded at my manner of conducting myself under the trying episode. But he, too, was bewitched with this beautiful demon in woman's form, and my wounded heart bled even then for him.

"Some day we'll visit you, Mr. John—myself and Joseph."

"I shall go immediately," I retorted, with great dignity.

But I did not go for months. Her voice was music, and though she managed at least to seem to devote the largest portion of her attention to her husband, she was not displeased at having in the household yet another whom she knew was a worshipper, and who could at any moment be brought to her feet.

It was midsummer, and my estate sorely needed my presence; but still I deferred going, bound as ever by the nameless fascination of this woman of wiles and treachery.

One morning some grand celebration or oration in the city, had called forth a crowd, and the principal thoroughfares were jammed. My brother had his office in a building then occupied quite generally by other members of his profession. On that morning I had hurriedly sought his office to get a better view of the procession as it passed down the street.

The windows of his elegant business apartment were low, and hung with inside shades that swung on hinges. My brother was more than usually affable this morning. Of late he had begun to exhibit a grateful feeling towards me for the manner in which I had apparently resigned all claims or thoughts of Isabel, who had become his wife by the exercise of such painful duplicity.

"Just from the house, John?" he asked, in his careless, mock-ingenuous way, with a studied smile.

"Yes, I walked out to see the multitude."

"And Isabel—did she change her mind about coming?"

"She thought she would hardly trust herself in the crowd under my protection," I answered.

"No, she is getting more and more fond of her husband, as a counsellor and protector, of late, I fancy, not to disparage yourself, who had the first chance at the lovely lady. But if I'd thought she wanted to come out I would have ordered the carriage round," he continued, rising and going to the window, for the sound of the approaching bands now smote our ears.

Mechanically I rose and followed his example, flinging back the sash, so that we both stood in the window, looking down upon the sea of hats and bonnets and parasols below.

How I hated my brother at that moment. This had been the first occasion on which he had dared to remark lightly upon the subject. It cut me like a knife with double edge, and seemed to set on blaze a smothered fever yet rankling in my heart. Did she then love him? Was he, the double-faced, pale, insidious man, who seemed in my eyes like a sickly poisonous human plant, was he capable of touching the magic cords of affection in the heart of this powerful woman where I had failed. The query stung me.

Al! no! Already I had come to a shrewdly correct conclusion of her motive for drawing him into her syren's net. Already Mrs. Joseph Rosepeake was getting fearfully extravagant. I smiled in the bitterness of my malignity when I thought what a life she would lead him. But I looked not at the procession—heard not the wild huzzas of the congregated thousands—I hated the man. And to hate a fellow being as I at that moment hated my own brother is a dreadful climax of the malice that breeds vengeance, and a dreadful sin. God forgive me that I committed it!

Oh, how the wild passion tingled in my veins; how the red blood rushed to my brain till I felt my head must burst: "Kill him!" whispered the tempter. The awful whisper seemed a kind of proffered balm for my wild mental passion and fever.

My brother stood on tip-toe, carelessly leaning his whole body from the window, supporting himself only by the ends of his fingers against the window-frame. I could not have resisted had eternal torments at that awful moment loomed before me! My itching fingers slyly caught his. Had the room been full, no one could have noticed the movement. One slight jerk, as if accidental, and a desultory spring to catch him, and he slipped through my arms, out into the air above the heads of that awful crowd, falling the height of three stories, and striking head foremost upon the pavement below amidst the shrieking bystanders.

I need not detail what followed. My brother was buried. I attended his funeral. His wife donned mourning for him. I kept my secret. I was visited with a terrible fit of sickness, but a providence, far more merciful than just to the manslayer decreed

that the deliberate murderer of his own brother should survive.

During my sickness I had been nursed by Isabel, and through my convalescence the same spell of her mysterious fascination was a potent acceleration to my recovery.

At the end of my illness I fled these scenes, and returned to India. And I had good cause for solitude. A fearful secret was now beginning to weigh me down. I felt that I was a murderer. Often in that year of seclusion which now followed did I wonder to myself whether in my delirious ravings I had unloosed my tongue, and my dread secret had passed the treacherous portals of my lips in a frenzied confession, and had been caught up by the ears of Isabel!

My suspicions were heightened one day by the receipt of a letter from her. But it proved only one of those tender little epistles which she knew so well how to direct to her "loving brother John," and sympathising in my loneliness, and inviting a visit from me at an early date. I wrote a polite reply. But even then the madness caused by the weight of my terrible secret was settling in my brain. A desire to see Isabel haunted me, and to discover, by her manner, if I could, whether she suspected aught of the existence of the burden nearest my soul. Then with my failing intellect the old dominant infatuation of love for the beautiful traitress gained faster and stronger hold upon me. I visited Isabel. As I was then it is not surprising that I found no traces of foul suspicion in Isabel's face or manner—nor more surprising that in one month's time I married her.

But now, instead of the happiness I had dreamed of, and longed and hoped for ever against hope and longing, oh, what suffering was my lot instead! There was still the horrible secret in my bosom. I had a demon about me—I was possessed of an evil spirit! And with the whispers of the still small voice, stronger and firmer grew the horrible fancy that my wife was as cognisant of this secret as myself. And against this phantom reason had no chance of an issue.

Soon after my marriage, I found, to my astonishment, that in the short period of her widowhood Isabel had squandered nearly all her late husband's property. Now drafts came upon my more slender resources which my falling mind and patience refused to submit to.

At last she demanded that my estate be sold to enable us to retain our English mansion. I indignantly refused compliance. Her conduct had roused the evil of my nature.

"But I must and will have the money. While I live I will keep up my style, and dress as I like, and wear my jewels!" she retorted emphatically, tapping the floor with her foot.

"You are as reckless as a Cleopatra, and as heartless as a marble woman. You have ruined me already," I cried in angry despair.

"You have not me to blame," she replied quickly.

"Years ago, when you first asked my hand, with more sincere good intent than I have since acted towards or upon you, I told you I was born without a heart; that I sometimes believed myself an evil spirit in human shape. But you would not listen, and now you have obtained me, and must abide my every act and its consequences till death."

My evil spirit! She had spoken it, indeed, I thought, as I leaned my head on both hands, but did not speak.

"Then you propose to accede to my request?" she continued, after a pause, not condescending to notice my distress.

"No!" I cried, starting up, thoroughly imbued with rage and the spirit of resistance. "No! Rather than sacrifice myself further to your reckless habits, I will disown you, so help me Heaven! notwithstanding the love I did bear you."

She laughed a scornful laugh, and stood erect before me. Glancing at the closed doors, she crossed in her majestic way to where I stood, and fairly hissed in my ear:

"John Rosepeake, if within twenty minutes you don't make over every particle of your property into my sole hands and keeping, I'll expose you!"

I stood staring at her like one in a horrid nightmare. The realisation of my fearful suspicions was slowly forcing itself upon my bewildered brain.

"You understand! I'll publish you to the world as the murderer of your brother!" and she paused, her wicked eyes riveted on my deathly face, and noted the effect of the fearful denunciation she had offered.

"Ah! You need not glare at me in that manner, John Rosepeake. I was with you in your fever that followed you after the deed. I drank in every word of your ravings, and wrote them down, too. I have sufficient witness, also—the signature of Mary, the chamber-girl. She is dead, and I am the only living person besides yourself who knows your guilt, John

Rosepeake, and I intend to make full use of my knowledge. Sit down and sign these deeds, and then take yourself away, and never, on your life, show yourself to me again, at least, till I can procure a divorce."

I did as she commanded. In a moment I was a penniless man, and she was the possessor of my estates.

"And now, John Rosepeake, I alone stand in your way. Kill me as you did your brother, if you dare!" and a look absolutely fearful gleamed in her features as she articulated these words one at a time, slowly.

"And now take yourself away as secretly as you can, on account of an inquisitive public. I shall give out that you made all preparations and have mysteriously taken your leave, I know not whither, being under an aberration of mind. Here is a hundred pounds, the last ready money I have, so you cannot call me cruel," and she laughed as gaily as if she were the most innocent, blithesome woman on earth.

"A mental aberration," she had said. It was strange; was the woman actually omniscient? Did she really know that I had already then, affection of the intellect, daily and insidiously growing on me?

I reeled to my room a few moments afterwards, and I never left it for thirteen days, and then strong men brought me forth in their arms, bound hand and foot, a raving madman. And that is how I am here in this madhouse.

There goes the keeper's sister again. The same golden-auburn curls. How much they look like hers! How I would like to tear them! She still moves in respectable circles, but how few of her acquaintances take her for the woman that she is? There is only one thing, however, where I can checkmate her—she cannot consummate her wishes to marry again till I die! And I am resolved to live on and on, though in a madhouse, till I reach four score and a hundred years, if I can. Did I wish it, I might die at almost any moment. How easily I might thrust the sharp point of this steel pen I now write with into my heart, and lance out my life-blood in silence!

But my forehead grows icy. The roars of the Prince of Darkness are becoming louder and fearfully exciting. When he howls we all howl, we all roar. The whole madhouse shrieks together in variations of chaotic chorus!

My forehead grows colder. The fever swells in my brain again! Another of my spells are coming on. In a few moments I shall be a raving maniac, yelling and tearing in sympathy with the best of them! Ha! ha!

It is coming. I will fold this and cry out for my keeper, to pass it into his hands through the grate. He will publish it for me. Reader, it is a true story! I have lived it all. I live it over and over again every time I rave, too.

Good-bye, reader. My head is cold, and yet the fever burns like distilled torment! I am a madman, and a murderer!

C. H. D.

THE CRANSTOWN DIAMONDS.

AUNT MARTHA VANDERPOOL was dying. Such was the news that flashed across the wires one August day.

Such a summons was not to be disregarded. I packed my carpet-bag, as in duty bound, took an early train for Holly Hedge, the family seat of the Vanderpools.

On reaching my journey's end, I rang the bell somewhat nervously. The door was opened by a servant I had never before seen.

"Am I in time?" was my first eager question.

"Yes sir."

She seemed to know who I was, and at once stepped aside for me to pass in. I went up stairs, thinking to go directly to my aunt's chamber. I had barely reached the upper landing, however, when a door opposite was pushed open, and a dark alert figure stood awaiting my approach.

The figure was that of a young woman. I had no heart to seize upon the salient points of the picture she presented. My first impression was that one of the deeper and graver undertones of night had somehow found form, and stepped out into the grayish light of day. Her hair was black, and so was her dress—a flimsy tissue, impalpable as cobweb. Jet ornaments hung pendant from her ears and clasped her wrists. Keen, restless eyes met mine, like fire stars set in the face of evening when it first frowns out the sunset fires.

A curious impression, and yet a natural one, perhaps. Drawing nearer, I held out my hand. She took it somewhat reluctantly.

"You are Barton Cranstown?" she asked, in a low, swift tone.

I bowed.

"Mrs. Vanderpool is expecting you."

"How is my aunt? She should have sent for me sooner. Is there no hope?"

"None," she answered, a curious icy ring in her voice. "The doctors have given her up. She will pass away peacefully and without much pain though."

"Can I not see her?"

The dark young woman looked perplexed and slightly annoyed. She toyed reflectively with the jet ornaments at her wrists.

"You must wait," she finally said. "Mrs. Vanderpool was sleeping when I left her a moment since."

Mrs. Vendale, the housekeeper, put her head outside of the sick-room.

"Is it you, Barton?" she exclaimed, in a tone of relief. "I am glad you are come. My mistress has asked for you a dozen times during the day. Heaven bless you, sir, come in. You are as welcome as the flowers in spring."

The young woman bit her lip, half-angrily as it seemed.

"Mrs. Vanderpool is awake, or the housekeeper would be less bustling in her greeting," she said. "If so, there is no need for delay."

She ushered me into the sick-room, with extreme reluctance, as if she thought I had no right there. Aunt Martha received me very affectionately, asking me to sit down by the bedside, betraying a sort of childish delight in my presence.

"I know you would come, Barton," she said, feebly. "I only regret that I did not send for you at once. There is nobody but you, in all the wide world, to mourn my loss."

The strange young woman was mixing some medicine at a side-table. She turned so abruptly, on hearing these last words of Aunt Martha's, as to nearly overturn the glass.

"Dear aunt, I am sorry to find you so ill," I said. "But you may recover. There is nothing like keeping up a brave heart."

She slowly shook her head.

"My days are numbered, Barton. I do not care how soon the summons comes, now that you are here. I shall have something to say to you before I die. It is in respect to my property. You are the nearest of kin, and I have made you my heir. You will also have the Cranstown diamonds. They should have been your father's instead of mine. It is the custom of the Cranstowns to leave them to the eldest son. The rule was deviated from in my favour, but now they shall go back where they properly belong. A Vanderpool has no right to them."

At that, the young woman left the stand, and came towards us, a deep, burning light in her starry eyes.

"People seldom get their just deserts in this world, madam," she said, abruptly.

Without waiting for any reply from Aunt Martha, she turned away, passing from the room. "Who is she?" I asked, the moment the door had closed behind her.

"Constance Bertrand. I was alone, and wanted a companion. I advertised for one, and she was among the applicants."

"Who recommended her?"

"Mrs. Colonel Victor."

"She was not here when I last came to Holly Hedge."

"No. You have kept aloof for the past three months. It is less than four weeks since she first came. I am quite fond of her. She is really a person of superior abilities, and would adorn a much more elevated sphere in life."

"No doubt," I returned musingly. To me Miss Bertrand was a sort of modern sphinx, and I was glad to listen to any particulars concerning her.

This conversation between Aunt Martha and myself was much more disjointed than I have here given it. She was too weak to talk much at one time, and every word cost her an effort that she could not wholly conceal. But, while I was in the room, she would wholly converse, and I had to go away in order that she might rest.

Finding my way into the parlour presently, somebody came out of a recess at the other end, book in hand, as I entered. I was not slow to recognise that dark, listless figure, with its sweeping, gauze-like robes; but it looked more unique than ever in that great gloomy room where the sunlight only came in in bright little patches here and there.

"Miss Bertrand," said I, coming over, and standing beside her.

A curious smile flickered about her lips. She looked at me half-defiantly.

"I see you have been inquiring about my name. My wonder is that you should have taken the trouble. You could not suppose that I stood in your light in any way?"

"I do not understand you. I was never good at reading riddles."

She shot me a keen, swift look.

"You have been informed of my present position in this house?"

"You are my aunt's—"

"Companion, since servant would be too vulgar a word for ears refined," seeing that I hesitated, at a loss for the proper term. "Mrs. Vanderpool is very wealthy, and quite fond of me. Many persons in my position would seek to feather their own nest; if I may be allowed to use such an expression."

I laughed, though more in the dark than ever. The impression somehow crossed my mind that she was trying to put me on the wrong scent. What possible object she could have in so doing was more than I could conceive, however.

"I have no fear that you will attempt anything of the sort."

"Why not? You would never miss a few hundred pounds out of the thousands that Mrs. Vanderpool will leave you possessed of. The money would be of incalculable advantage to me. Have you any idea what I was before I came to Holly Hedge?"

"No."

"A schoolmistress!" her voice low and scornful. "I was struggling against a poverty hateful as death. There were years of my life in which I only existed. I shudder to think of them. In coming here I found a servitude that smacked of freedom. It was like a draught of rich red wine."

She broke off abruptly, folding her hands in her lap. What could I say to the enigmatical woman—how assure her of my sympathy?

"Your experience must have been very bitter. You ought now to see the brighter side of life. Say to my aunt what you have said to me. I know she is tender-hearted and generous."

"I am not a beggar, Mr. Cranstown," her lips curled haughtily. "I don't know why I have dealt so frankly with you, and suffered you to see some of my deformities. It was not because I expected help from you or yours. I will never ask more than justice at the hands of the world."

"I believe you have some trouble of which I know nothing, but which I ought to know, perhaps. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing," she shortly. "I have shocked you sufficiently, and will hold my peace after asking a single question. Did the deceased Mr. Vanderpool have any relatives who will be interested in the division of the property of his widow?"

"I have heard it said that there are two orphan nieces living. The story may be true or may not; it makes but little difference. Mr. Vanderpool was comparatively a poor man. My aunt's property came from the Cranstowns. During his life, Uncle Vanderpool entered into a great many successful speculations and thus increased it. That is all I know of the matter."

Miss Bertrand listened eagerly, her breath coming quickly and sharply. But she said nothing. Presently there was a soft footfall in the hall outside, and a servant looked in, the same prime, quiet girl who had first answered my ring at the door. On seeing me, she started back in manifest confusion.

"Were you looking for me, Patty?" Miss Bertrand asked, her face a shade paler than it had been a moment previously.

"No," answered the girl. "I thought the housekeeper came this way."

She passed quickly out.

"An interesting face," said I. "That girl is intellectually above her station. How long has she been an inmate of the household?"

Miss Bertrand had dropped her book, and now turned to pick it up.

"You must ask Mrs. Vendale," was her reply.

"She ought to be better informed than am I."

She hurried away, as if to avoid answering any further questions. Left alone I took a reflective turn in the room.

"A *lusus nature*," was my mental comment. "That woman is a rare piece of still nature. There is some of the stuff in her of which diplomats are made. Deep and still, those are the adjectives that fit her. I wonder if she is tender and womanly also?"

Later we were in Aunt Martha's room. Miss Bertrand was sitting busily about, but I sat in a chair by the bedside. The poor woman seemed to be sinking fast. She was content now to have me near, where her eyes could occasionally rest upon my face. There had been a long silence in the chamber. Aunt Martha broke it:

"Barton," she said, feebly, "place your hand beneath my pillow."

I obeyed.

"I find a small box here, Aunt Martha. Shall I take it out?"

She nodded. Drawing back my hand I discovered that it contained an ebony casket of ancient and curious workmanship.

"Open it," was the language of her eyes.

Miss Bertrand left her work, coming towards us, and taking her stand behind my chair. She was singularly pale even to the lips.

A tiny golden key was in the lock of the casket. Snapping back the lid, a vision of unexpected splendour stared me in the face. Curious, sparkling atoms, like stars through a rift of cloud, or the sun-kisses on dewdrops, or the sparks of joy bright eyes, lay ceaselessly flickering in the velvet-lined receptacle—atoms which in that darkened chamber shone pale and silvery, like the soft mellow glow of a pure, clear moonlight.

"The Cranstown diamonds!"

"Yes," whispered Aunt Martha. "I keep them near me day and night. They are the most precious trust I shall bequeath to you, Barton. Only a Cranstown by birth or marriage must ever wear them. But few families can boast of such an heirloom. You have no idea how I love them. They must be kept as the apple of your eye, Barton."

She spoke in a feverishly excited way, that seemed to tell fearfully upon her. I had long known that these jewels were her pride, and did not wonder at the emotion she manifested.

Patty opened the door.

"Did anyone ring?" she asked.

Miss Bertrand made a swift movement, covering the casket, as well as she could, with one of her hands.

"No," she answered, sharply.

A subtle, suspicious light leaped into Patty's eyes, but she went away without saying anything farther. Miss Bertrand drew back her hand, which was now nervously unsteady. I observed a plain gold ring on one of the fingers.

"Return the casket to its place beneath the pillow. I hate the sight of it," she said, with singular harshness.

Aunt Martha signalled assent, putting up one of her wasted hands to fondle it, as she would have fondled a little child.

"The Cranstown diamonds," she murmured, a flush of family pride kindling in her pale cheeks.

I watched with Aunt Martha, that night. Late in the evening, when she seemed inclined to sleep, I drew back in the shadow of the curtains, for she would not close her eyes when I sat where she could look upon my face.

She must have been sleeping for an hour or more, when the door opened, and Miss Bertrand came gliding noiselessly within. She did not see me, but went straight towards the bedside. Aunt Martha stirred slightly.

"Are you awake?" whispered Miss Bertrand.

"Yes."

"There is nobody in the room. I am surprised that Mr. Cranstown should have left you."

"He must be tired, poor boy," said my dear aunt in her feeblest tone.

I remained perfectly quiet. Miss Bertrand, still unconscious of my presence, prepared a composing draught, and then sat down near the head of the bed.

"I have something to say to you, Mrs. Vanderpool," she began, in a singularly unsteady voice. "You are strong enough to listen."

"Yes," the tone indicative of surprise.

"It is in respect to your property," her face growing strangely pale in the lamp-light. "You have left the bulk of it to your nephew, Mr. Barton Cranstown?"

"Yes, I shall ask him to give you five hundred pounds. The servants are all remembered in my will, with the exception of Patty, who has only been here a month. But Barton will be generous to her."

"It is not that," impatiently. "I wish to ask if you consider the decision just? Are there none others who ought to claim a share in these riches?"

"None," was answered slowly.

Miss Bertrand bit her crimson lip.

"Perhaps not among your own relatives in blood, the Cranstowns. But what of the Vanderpools?"

"I know but little of them," returned Aunt Martha, peevishly. "The only brother of my deceased husband is dead. He never had any sisters."

There was a short silence. Miss Bertrand moved restlessly in her chair.

"That brother is dead, it is true," she resumed, finally. "But I happen to know that he left two orphan daughters behind him. Those girls are little less than beggars, so shockingly poor have they become. The time-old curse lies heavy upon them—they must work or starve."

"I do not know them. I have never seen them."

"But I have, and can vouch for the truth of what I have told you," her eyes glittering unaccountably. "I wanted to tell you all this sooner, but you never seemed willing to listen. With your consent, I will send for the poor motherless girls!"

"No, no," muttered Aunt Martha, faintly. "I do not wish to see them. They must not be brought here at this late hour."

Miss Bertrand caught her breath like one in keen pain.

"You ought to help them," she said, slowly. "A tenth part of your wealth would make them comfortable. It is cruelly wrong to leave them in penury and want."

"The Cranstowns must remain a rich family as they are a noble one," was the sick woman's obstinate answer, the pride of blood being strong, even in death.

A cry of despair thrilled through the silence. It startled me, alarmed, from my hiding-place where I had been listening to the conversation. Miss Bertrand turned with wide-opened eyes on hearing my step.

"Eavesdropper!"

The word dropped like a bomb from her lips, blinding hot. Overwhelmed with shame and confusion I could answer nothing to it. Consciousness of guilt makes strange cowards of us all.

In the ghastly gray of the morning Aunt Martha Vanderpool died. I stood by the bed-side, and her last smile was for me—her last act to draw my hand to her clammy lips. God bless her! She had always tried to lead a pure and upright life. If she had failed, it was not for me to judge her.

Mr. Richard Thornton was the family solicitor—a sharp, shrewd man of the world, kind-hearted in the main, but with susceptibilities somewhat blunted. He soon heard the sad news and made his appearance at Holly Hedge before the morning was half-spent.

"Glad you're on hand, Cranstown," he said with characteristic bluntness. "Knew you'd been sent for. I drew up the will. You are the only person it particularly concerns."

Such talk was extremely annoying, and I escaped from it as soon as possible, going to hunt up Miss Bertrand, though it was half an hour or more before I succeeded in finding her. Even then she sought to avoid me.

"You called me eavesdropper," I cried catching her hand, in passing. "The charge was just, and I deserve your scorn. You must try, though, not to think too unkindly of me."

"We will not discuss the subject, Mr. Cranstown," she said, coldly.

"You are implacable. Listen to what I wish to say, and then you shall not be annoyed by me again. Last night you spoke of the Vanderpool race. They ought to be invited to the funeral. Will you undertake that duty?"

"It would be useless trouble."

"Are they so very proud, or only resentful? I shall also depute you to inform them that I do not sympathise with the feelings my aunt cherished towards them. They should have been remembered in her will. I shall insist on making over to them a fair proportion of the property that has been left to me."

Miss Bertrand looked me curiously in the face, as if at a loss what to think. Her lips were nervously quivering.

"I did not take you for that sort of man," she said frankly and suddenly.

We were standing on the landing. Just then, Mr. Thornton opened the door of the chamber where my aunt lay, and beckoned for me to come in. Miss Bertrand followed.

Mrs. Vendale was in the room with the lawyer. The latter went directly to a stand by the bedside, bringing from thence the jewel-casket. He pushed it under our very noses, and snapped open the lid. The box was empty.

"Ah-h-h!" he grunted, significantly.

I cried out. Miss Bertrand became ghastly pale, and clung to a chair for support.

"Ah-h-h!" the lawyer repeated. "Where are the diamonds? Mrs. Vendale says they were there safe enough last night. Her mistress would keep them under the pillow. They were forgotten in the excitement of Mrs. Vanderpool's death. I was the first to think of them—one must look after the property left in his charge, you know. I took the casket from under the pillow. It was empty, as you see it. Where are the diamonds?"

Nobody answered. A sort of chill seemed to have seized upon us all—that awful shivering that comes of a great fear or horror. It was not so much that the diamonds were gone as that they must have been stolen, and by somebody under the self-same roof with ourselves.

"Who is the thief?" Mr. Thornton exclaimed. "You and I must hunt him down, Cranstown. Those jewels are worth thousands. You can't afford to lose them."

He turned on his heel and went back to the bed again, running his hand carefully under the pillow

where the casket had been kept. When he withdrew it, after a little, there was a smile of triumph on his face.

"A clue!" he cried, holding up something for us to see.

It was a plain gold ring. A sort of shivering sob came from Miss Bertrand. She turned her back on us for a single instant. When I saw her face again it was like that of the dead.

"To whom does this ring belong?" asked the lawyer, coming nearer, his look stern and implacable.

It was Mrs. Vendale who replied:

"There are two of that sort worn in this house. I have remarked them more than once, because they are precisely alike, both having a raised letter 'V' on the part worn next the palm. Miss Bertrand has one, and Patty the maid, the other."

The "V" was as plain as it was unmistakable. Of course we all looked at Miss Bertrand's hands. She held them out without a word of remonstrance. The fingers were ringless.

"Call Patty," said Mr. Thornton hoarsely.

The maid was summoned. She came in staidly and quietly, but I saw that her lips were white.

"Hold up your hands," commanded the lawyer.

She obeyed, mechanically. She did not manifest the least symptom of surprise or curiosity. Her movements were those of an automaton.

"Where is your ring?" asked Mr. Thornton, for there was none upon her fingers, any more than upon Constance Bertrand's.

She hesitated. A grayish pallor spread over her face. She dropped both hands heavily to her side.

"I lost it this morning, while gathering some roses for the vases," she answered, finally.

"I have found it," said the lawyer. "Here it is," holding out his open palm in which lay the ring he had taken from beneath the pillow.

She looked at it sadly and deliberately. Miss Bertrand leaned forward in breathless suspense, her eyes wide-open, with an appealing look.

"That is not mine," said Patty quietly.

Mr. Thornton was nonplussed. He took the house-keeper to one side, allowing me to make up the trio.

"One of those women is the thief," he said to her. "Which is the guilty party?"

"How should I know?" returned Mrs. Vendale, pettishly. "Both have conducted themselves very properly since coming to this house. I would as soon think evil of my own flesh and blood."

"Humph! Best assured that this matter will be thoroughly tested. Whose duty is it to make Mrs. Vanderpool's bed?"

"Miss. She would not suffer anybody else to touch it. She was very particular about such things, and seemed annoyed if any other hand than mine shook up a pillow, even."

Mr. Thornton took two or three rapid turns about the room. Finally he came back to where Miss Bertrand and Patty were standing.

"There has been a robbery in this house," he said, abruptly, watching both their faces with greedy interest. "The Cranstown diamonds are stolen. Circumstances direct suspicion against you two. Whichever is the guilty party will save trouble and needless mortification by making a full confession here and now."

His expression was cruelly severe. After the first exclamation of surprise Patty broke out in vehement and almost angry denial of all knowledge of the jewels in question. Miss Bertrand said nothing, but sank into the nearest seat, strangely listless and apathetic. When asked what she had to offer against the charge, she slowly answered:

"If you really look upon me as a thief, nothing I can say will have power to change your belief."

Her expression was indicative of keen mental pain. Pitying her with all my heart I held out my hand.

"Nobody would think of accusing you, Miss Bertrand. Our good friend Mr. Thornton is beside himself to make use of such language."

She did not even look at me. The lawyer gave a disdainful sniff. His eyes never moved from her face for the space of five minutes.

"I am not the only foolish one in this house," he muttered once, during this eager scrutiny.

Finally he turned.

"I shall make a thorough search for the missing jewels," he said. "Mrs. Vendale may assist me, and we will begin with Patty's trunk, first of all. Cranstown, you are to remain with Miss Bertrand."

Patty led the way from the room with quite a show of alacrity. She seemed perfectly willing the search should take place. Miss Bertrand kept her seat, her eyes steadfastly fixed on the floor.

"Do not let me detain you," I said to her, when we were alone.

"I am your prisoner, in some sort," she returned, haughtily. "I choose to remain."

I might have gone away myself, but it would only

have made her position the more trying. Mr. Thornton was gone a long time, but came back no wiser than he went away.

"No new developments thus far," he said, shortly. "Miss Bertrand, may I trouble you for your keys?"

She refused to give them up.

"You may take them from me by force, but you will get them no other way. I do not recognise your right to search my private room. If I am a thief, you must take me into custody."

The lawyer smothered an oath. "That is what we will do, miss. A warrant shall be made out within the next hour; I will teach you what it is to defy me."

At this juncture I ventured to interpose.

"The loss is mine, Mr. Thornton, and I claim the privilege of acting in accordance with my own better judgment in this matter. Miss Bertrand is not to be molested. We will bide our time, and wait for further developments. One of the under-servants may be the guilty party. We must keep a closer watch on them all."

Miss Bertrand lifted her eyes a moment gratefully. "You are very kind," she said, and passed away from the room.

The lawyer was thoroughly angry, and not easily pacified. "Such conduct does justice to your heart but not to your head, Cranstown," he muttered. "The jewels will never be recovered. You are giving Miss Bertrand ample opportunity in which to have them conveyed to some place where they can be kept in safety."

"Miss Bertrand knows nothing of them."

"Humph! You are easily gulled, my young friend. Experience will give you more shrewdness. A clever woman could deceive the devil himself. I don't wonder that you are deceived."

He tried to argue the question. Circumstances told frightfully against Constance Bertrand. Everything that had occurred since I first came to Holly Hedge would have been taken by some as so much evidence to fix the theft that had been committed upon her. I kept these little circumstances carefully to myself. With Mr. Thornton they would have amounted to conviction; he was already assured in his own mind that the poor girl was guilty. I did not wish to do or say anything to strengthen the impression.

We sometimes have convictions that are in opposition to all external evidence. I was possessed of such a feeling. Despite all I had seen and heard I would willingly have staked my own reputation on Miss Bertrand's innocence. It was a blind, unreasoning faith, as strange as unwarrantable.

We kept our own counsel; and the preparations for Aunt Martha's funeral went on. The under-servants were not made acquainted with the loss, but they were closely watched. Mrs. Vendale even instituted a stealthy search among some of their effects, but nothing came of it.

For my part, I sent a hasty note to Mrs. Colonel Victor by whom Miss Bertrand had been recommended to my aunt. A reply came on the day subsequent to the funeral.

"Mrs. Victor did not know, and had never heard of Constance Bertrand. If such a person assumed to have a recommendation from her that recommendation was a base forgery."

This answer distressed and perplexed me. A person who will resort to deception in one instance is not to be depended on in another. What was I to think? Miss Bertrand must be thoroughly base, or the victim of circumstances over which she had no control. Which was the truth?

Unfortunately, the letter fell into Mr. Thornton's hands. He read it with ill-concealed triumph.

"I do not imagine you will take that young woman's part hereafter," he said. "Her career in this house has been a marked one, when we consider its brevity. She introduced herself by forging a testimonial. She tried playing the agreeable to Mrs. Vanderpool, but did not happen to hold the winning cards. As a last resort, she stole the Cranstown diamonds."

"You hate the poor girl, and have no mercy on her," I returned, warmly.

"No, I am stating stubborn facts. Deny them if you can."

"I admit the circumstances are against her. But that fact proves nothing. She may be innocent as a babe unborn. You interpret her conduct to suit yourself."

"You mean that I use a little reason and common sense. I do not wish to accuse anybody unjustly."

We were walking on the piazza when the conversation occurred. Mr. Thornton took a turn by himself, but finally came back again.

"From the beginning, I knew the theft of the diamonds lay between Miss Bertrand and Patty. Circumstances abundantly prove that the latter is innocent. There is but one inference to be drawn."



[FIRST IMPRESSIONS.]

I now wish to know how you will proceed in the matter."

Angry blood crimsoned my face. "Rest assured of this, Mr. Thornton," I said, "that I shall never resort to extreme measures with a poor, misguided girl!"

"Very well, sir," and then he went away in high dudgeon.

He was scarcely gone when a face appeared in an open window near which I was standing. It was Constance Bertrand's, but so pale and agitated as to be scarcely recognizable.

"God bless you sir," said she, sweetly. "You are the last person to show leniency. I had no right to expect kindness from you—I did not expect it. I shall always be grateful."

She looked so wan and sorrowful that I longed to take her in my arms, and soothe her with loving words. She was no longer a sphinx to study, but a dear, suffering woman to console. Finding no words in which to answer, I pressed her hand in silence.

"You know the worst of me that is to be told," she resumed, in a raised voice. "You can never estimate what burthens I have borne. You might not believe me were I to recount them even in my feeble way. Ten thousand diamonds would be a poor return for one hour of such torture as I have endured."

She wrung her hands helplessly. Looking at her, at the dark, passionate face, the wide-open eyes, the pouting lips, lusciously red, I forgot the brevity of time in which I had known this woman, forgot the cloud of suspicion that hung heavy and dark over her devoted head, closing in blacker and more deadly every hour, forgot all that I should have remembered, perhaps, and stooping suddenly, I took her into my arms, holding her for a brief breathing space clasped fiercely to my heart.

"You see how I love and trust you, Constance," fell from my lips, brokenly.

A moment she lay on my breast like a tired child—then broke away, sobbing violently.

Later in the day Mr. Thornton put in a second appearance at Holly Hedge. This time he was not alone; a quiet, grave-looking man in the plain dress of a private citizen accompanied him.

He summoned me to the library, and then sent for Constance Bertrand. She came in, presently, very pale, but perfectly composed. She paused near the door, looking inquiringly at Mr. Thornton, but sedulously avoiding my gaze.

"This is Mr. Ruggles," said the lawyer, introducing his companion. "I prevailed on him to come over with me. We have a little matter of business to settle that is especially in his line."

Miss Bertrand gave him one of her keen, alert looks. "He is come to arrest me, I suppose," she said, colouring up, and then growing pale again.

I started to my feet, foaming with anger.

"Richard Thornton, have you dared bring an officer into this house?" I demanded.

"I have merely done my duty," was his quiet reply. "Mrs. Vanderpool's property was a sacred trust until I could deliver it safely into your hands. My duty was clear, though I have entered on it reluctantly."

"He is right," said Constance, now deadly pale. "The diamonds are very valuable, and of course every possible effort should be made for their recovery. What do you propose to do?" addressing the question to Mr. Ruggles.

"Our first move will be to search your private apartment, madam;" that gentleman made answer.

Her hands dropped together with the gesture of one in keen pain. "Follow me," she said, in a voice unnaturally sharp and clear.

She led the way to her chamber. I could not resist the impulse to follow. Walking with the vacant, abstracted air of a somnambulist, she crossed the

apartment, and unlocked a small desk of inlaid wood standing on a table against the opposite wall.

"I do not wish to cause unnecessary delay," she said, coldly and quietly. "It would be folly to make a protracted search. Here are the jewels," lifting out the diamonds and dropping them on the table as if they were burning coals of fire.

"O Constance!"

This was my exclamation. Then there was a breathless silence in the room, horrible as death, during which the hunted girl faced us defiantly. Her breath ran over her lips icy cold.

"You find stolen property in my possession," she said, folding her arms. "I do not expect you to spare me. I am willing to meet the penalty."

I took my place beside her, ready, even then, to defend her to the last. Mr. Ruggles drew nearer, puzzled, and manifestly disturbed. At that moment there was a rustle on the landing outside, and Patty rushed past him, throwing herself at my feet.

"Mercy, mercy!" she shrieked, lifting both her hands. "I am the thief! Oh, be merciful!"

I stood staring at her, vaguely conscious of her words. Constance caught hold of my arm to save herself from falling. Her head sank on her breast, and she groaned audibly.

"I am the thief," shrieked Patty, for the second time. "I stole the diamonds. I was an awful temptation, and I could not resist it. I thought I was defrauded of my just rights."

Constance raised her head.

"She is crazed—you must not mind her," pointing to Patty. "I am ready to go to jail, officer; I place myself in your custody."

At this Patty screamed out violently.

"You have suffered enough that you might screen me, Constance. I never dreamed that it would really come to this. Sister, you shall not pay the penalty of my crimes. I am not so thoroughly selfish as you seem to think."

Constance tried in vain to silence her. She even sought to push her from the room, but Patty betrayed an equal obstinacy, continuing to cry out, and to accuse herself of the theft of the diamonds. I began to see the truth, as in a glass, darkly.

"Who are you, and who is this girl?" I asked, addressing Constance.

She would not answer, but turned away, hiding her face. Patty swallowed a choking sob, and then spoke out fearlessly:

"She is Constance Vanderpool, and I am her sister. We were very poor, and sorely tempted. We wrote to Aunt Martha a great many times, but she never answered our letters. Finally we got positions in this house, she as Aunt Martha's companion, and I as servant. Of course we assumed names for the occasion; I wrote out a false recommendation for Constance. We had seen Aunt Martha's advertisement, and that is what first put the idea in our heads."

"Why did you wish to come here?" asked Mr. Thornton.

"We were wretchedly poor as I said. We thought Aunt Martha might learn to love us in time, and then we would tell her all about our little plot. It was very foolish, perhaps, but there seemed no other way. She would not have listened to us, had we told her at once. We worked hard and waited, hoping she would gradually unbend towards us. If she had not died so suddenly, everything might have gone well with us."

"And that is how you came to steal the diamonds?"

"Yes. I knew we were not mentioned in the will—Constance told me. It seemed to stir up all the wickedness in my heart. I was nearly crazed. I thought we had a just claim to a portion of the property. So I stole the diamonds."

She paused, shuddering convulsively. "Constance, the dear girl, would have taken all the blame on herself. She did it to screen me. She threw her gold ring away for that purpose. But she had nothing to do with the theft. It was a terrible blow to her when she knew it. I am the vile creature who has brought shame and disgrace on us both."

I could hear no more. I took Constance's hands in mine, realising what a martyr she was. I caught her in my arms and covered her face with kisses. I held her close; and would not let her go.

"Look up," I whispered. "There is nothing more to fear. You have been more sinned against than sinning—both you and Patty. This affair shall be hushed up among ourselves, and you shall wear the Cranstown diamonds on your wedding-day."

Her eyes sought mine in a long, earnest, and intent gaze.

"There is but one jewel that I crave, Barton," she said, slowly, "a pearl of great price—your love." That was hers already, and how could I bestow it anew.

R. W.



[KILL OR TORTURE.]

THE BIRTH MARK.

CHAPTER XII.

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell;
I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune,
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

Sit you down
And let me wring your heart.

Hamlet.

PEDRO DIAZ, after doubling and turning until he was convinced that his pursuer was completely baffled, ascended the street steps of the residence of Inez and pulled the door-bell.

It was some time before he was admitted, and he swaggered into the hall with a howl and a scowl when the door was opened.

"Silence!" whispered Inez de Parma, for it was she who admitted him, "the parlour is filled with company! Follow me."

She did not remain to see whether he was willing or not, but moved away towards the stairs which led to the second story.

He was by her side in an instant. Heavily framed as he was, he could tread as softly as a cat when he desired.

He grasped her by the arm, and whispered:

"No treachery! I know your heart, woman. If I am not with certain friends within an hour, they will seek me in this house."

"Has Pedro Diaz lived to be a coward?" she asked, with a cutting sneer. "Are you afraid of a woman? If you are, the door is behind you—go back."

Had she attempted to persuade him to go on he would have left the house; but her sneer ruffled him.

"Go on—I follow!" he said, as he showed the hilt of a knife and tapped upon it with his coarse, thick fingers.

She turned and ascended the stairs. By her orders no servants were in that part of the house, and he followed her unseen by any one.

"You are going very high," he said, as she began to ascend a second flight of stairs.

"The room in which I wish to converse with you is on the next floor. I wish to be safe from eavesdroppers—"

"So you go up to the eaves. Well, go on he said; "I never feared you yonder in Spain, where you had a score of daggers at your back—why fear you in England?"

She went up; he followed, and soon after she opened the door of a small room, in which sat Dr. Kampton.

Pedro Diaz was not surprised on perceiving Kampton. He had expected that Inez de Parma would be supported by the presence of her son, and would have been surprised if Kampton had not been there.

He entered, and as he did so took the key from the lock.

"You are suspicious, sir," remarked Kampton, haughtily.

"Why should I not be? Your mother and I have anything but love for each other; and if I read your eye aright you are my enemy," replied Pedro, gleaming sharply about the room.

The room was small and scantily furnished. Besides the shelves against the walls—upon which were a few old books—there was nothing in the room except a table and three chairs.

In one of these chairs sat Dr. Kampton, and as Inez entered she carelessly seated herself in another. The third, a large, heavy arm-chair, remained unoccupied, while Pedro examined the room.

He peered about very suspiciously and examined the bare floor as if he feared the trap doors. He sounded the floor with his heels, stamping heavily, and having satisfied himself that no danger was to be apprehended in that matter, dragged the arm-chair into another position and sat down.

"You have left me the most comfortable seat, my dear friend," he said, sneeringly, as he drew a brace of pistols and placed them upon the table before him. "I am ready now, countess, to hear what you have to say."

"It is for you to open the conversation," replied Inez, coldly. "You would not have revealed yourself to me unless you had an object in view."

"So? Well, I need money, gold."

"No doubt, but I have no gold for Pedro Diaz. The days when Inez de Parma filled the purse of Pedro Diaz have been gone for many years."

"Those were golden days," laughed Pedro, not at all abashed by her coldness. "Young man, what think you of your mother's former husband?"

"I am here to protect her from insolence, nothing more. Remember that," replied Dr. Kampton.

"State what has led you to intrude yourself upon our notice, or depart. You cannot brow-beat me, sir."

The Portuguese saw that at a glance.

There was nothing timid or cowardly in the face, tone and air of Robert Kampton. The sheen of the pistols on the table did not alarm a man who was well armed and familiar with fierce gambling affrays. He was tall, active and powerful, too, and Pedro Diaz saw that in this swarthy-faced, sullen-eyed young man he had no common enemy to crush

Savage scowls, profane threats, and fierce looks could not terrify that desperate spirit.

"Young man," said Pedro, sternly; "have you ever heard this woman say that I was her husband?"

"Address what you have to say to me," replied Inez, "I have told him that you were my husband, and that he is your son."

"I have never believed the last," said Pedro fiercely. "He is the son of Ferdinand, Duke D'Ossiri. But let me speak of the past before we speak of the present."

"No. I do not wish to hear of the past. Be brief. Why are you here?"

"Ah, you would like to forget the past," cried Pedro, smiting the table with his coarse hand.

"That unpleasant past, in which the highborn Countess Inez de Parma fell madly in love with Pedro Diaz—eloped with him, was married to him, then loved D'Ossiri procured a divorce, and after all saw D'Ossiri the husband of the Countess Isabella. That is very unpleasant is it not? But I like to recall those golden days, because they have much to do with the present."

He paused as if to mark the effect of his words. Dr. Kampton's face and that of his mother remained haughtily impassive.

Pedro Diaz continued:

"You, Inez de Parma, stole the daughter of the duke. You need not deny it for Rosa Baetta, who was your accomplice, was at the same time mine."

Inez started, for this she had never suspected. She said nothing, though her eyes flashed inquiry.

"Yes, Rosa Baetta was my accomplice. I was her lover. It appears that you did not kill the child, that you have reared her for a certain purpose. To wed her to your son—"

"If so, and I admit it," interrupted the countess, scornfully; "and if my son is the son of Ferdinand D'Ossiri do you suppose that I would wed him to his sister? That is to the daughter of the duke, whom you say is his father? No, Pedro Diaz, this young man is your son. But no matter for that. He detests you as I do—infinity. Go on."

"Perhaps you have by this time discovered that the child you have raised under the name of Carola Fairmont, is not the daughter of the duke?" he said staring at her steadily.

"I do not understand you."

"Perhaps not. I will see about that presently. Listen—I am to receive one thousand pounds if I restore the stolen child to her parents."

"I have nothing to do with that."

"Oh, of course not, especially as the lost countess

is at this moment in your house—perhaps in the parlour below. Come, if you will work with me in this matter we need not dispute. I have no objection to Dr. Kampton's marrying Carola, the daughter of the duke."

"Your objections are nothing to me, nor to him." "We shall see, my countess. You do not know that I saw the duchess this morning. That I have promised to lead her child to her to-morrow."

"You have promised that?" "Yes. Are you angry? No matter. I am willing to receive one thousand from you to break my promise. "Now I understand your purpose," said the countess. "You intend to force my fears to pay that great sum, and then to betray me to the duke and win as much more."

"You sneer at my offer. You had best accept. Rosa Baetta is in this city!"

The countess was much startled by this assertion. She had crushed one danger in having smitten James Raymond; she was about to crush another, for Pedro Diaz was at her mercy, though he little knew it, as he lolled so insolently in that chair, his brawny arms resting upon the wide side supports. But here was another danger, if Pedro spoke truly, and that he did she saw in his confident air.

"If you do not consent to my proposition," he said emphatically; "I will go from this room to the duke and duchess, and have them hither this night. I will point out this house, and say to them:

"In this house Inez de Parma holds the lost Countess Perdita D'Ossiri. Rescue your child, or this Inez de Parma will force her to marry her son who may be the son of Pedro Diaz, or the son of the Duke D'Ossiri!"

"You are very rich. You stole jewels of immense value when you stole the child. Had you placed the jewels in the care of Rosa Baetta as you did the child, I would have received them. But you thought as much of your plunder as you did of revenge. You have enjoyed both for many years; I claim my share now!"

He said this with his most insolent air, slapping his hands upon the broad arms of the heavy chair as he concluded.

She was sitting nearly opposite to him. She had approached him imperceptibly by moving her chair nearer and nearer to him, until her foot rested upon one of the lower rounds of his chair.

As he concluded with the words: "I claim my share now," she bore heavily upon that round upon which her foot rested, and said:

"Take it!"

As she spoke, a curved clamp of iron shot out from each arm of the chair, and encircled the wrists of the Portuguese, binding them hard and fast to the arms of the chair upon which they rested. At the same instant a bar of steel, hitherto concealed in the high back of the chair, and held by powerful springs and set in motion by the pressure upon the round, struck him a stunning blow upon the side of his head.

For a moment he was insensible, so severe and unexpected was the blow. When his consciousness returned he found himself gagged and his feet and body tightly corded to the treacherous chair.

The countess regarded him with a look of malicious triumph.

Dr. Kampton gazed upon him with an air of indifference.

The Portuguese struggled for a moment, but perceiving the folly of resistance, he remained motionless, though his eyes gleamed with rage.

"Pedro Diaz," said the countess, severely; "in Spain I was ever in terror, for you thrice, to my knowledge, attempted to assassinate me. How often you repeated these attempts I do not know. You have hunted me down after years of concealment, and I know that but for your greed of gold you would again, in England, have attempted to murder me. You have dared to plot against me again. If you escape from me you will not rest until you have killed me. Therefore, what right have you to expect mercy from me?"

She paused and gazed coldly into his face. He did not tremble. There was no fear of death in his wrathful eyes as they unflinchingly met hers. He could not reply, but his eyes said:

"I defy you! I hate you! If I could I would kill you!"

The countess continued:

"This is your son. What have I to gain by speaking falsely to you in this matter? Nothing. It is true that I loved Ferdinand D'Ossiri, but my son was born before I obtained my divorce from my mad union with you, and so long as I was your wife I was faithful to you. You may believe it or not, as you please, yet this fact alone allows you to live. Your son, who detests you, does not wish that you shall die by my hand, nor by his—at least, not to-night."

"Ah!" thought Pedro, "if she does not kill me to-night, I may live to kill her. What a trap you have run your head into, Pedro Diaz. A thousand curses take the chair, its inventor, and especially Inez de Parma! Perhaps this young man is my son, as she says. What then? He hates me."

"I allow you to live for the present," she resumed, emphasising the words—"for the present,"—with a threatening intonation which he knew meant: "But I intend to kill you hereafter."

"I allow this unmerited favour, Pedro Diaz, because your son asks it. He does not wish to be present when you die. But do not hope to escape to kill me. You shall not escape."

"Before morning my son will be the husband of the daughter of Ferdinand, Duke of Ossiri, and to-morrow I—not you—will lead her parents to her, and say: 'Behold your daughter is now my daughter!'"

"Ah, if I could speak," thought the Portuguese, "I might stop that marriage. But I am helpless now. Wait; I may have revenge."

"Go, Robert," she said, turning to her son; "go and procure the services of a clergyman of any creed and let this marriage be performed speedily."

"It may consume much time to find one willing to come at this hour. More to find one willing to wed an unwilling bride," replied the doctor.

"Here," said his mother, as she wrote a name upon a card; "this man will do anything for gold. Take the affair to him."

"I must find this man alive on my return."

"I pledge my honour that he will be alive when you return," replied the countess.

"Heavens of blue!" thought the Portuguese; "I do not like the tone in which she says:

"You will find him alive. I see murder in her eye—I hear murder in her voice."

"Mother, if indeed you are my mother," said Robert Kampton, with angry bitterness; "I warn you not to harm this man, whom you assert to be my father. We have committed—"

"Enough! I will not harm a hair on his head," interrupted the countess, severely. "Haste, for it is growing late."

Dr. Kampton left the room, and soon after his mother heard the front door clash as he left the house.

She then sat down before Pedro Diaz and gazed into his face with vindictive eyes.

"Great heavens!" thought the Portuguese, as he read her expression; "this woman means to torture me before she kills me."

CHAPTER XIII.

More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea;

Look on the tragic loading of this bed;

This is thy work—the object-poison sight.

"PEDRO DIAZ," she said, "that has come about for which I have prayed for years—you are at my mercy."

He shrugged his shoulders and stamped.

"I understand you, ruffian," she continued, "you mean I never pray."

He nodded and scowled an affirmative.

"Pedro Diaz, I care nothing for the agency that has placed you in my power. Oh, wretch, brute; for years my life has been one of terror by day and night. You were ever before me. You, armed with this knife."

She drew his broad, keen-bladed weapon from his bosom—that weapon whose hilt he had tapped so boastfully.

"Ah, she intends to kill me with my own knife," thought the Portuguese.

"You were ever before me," she continued. You, hideous, accursed nightmare of my life, have had your boot upon my breast for many a year. Was I not a mad, mad fool ever to love such a man? Great heavens! when I remember, Pedro Diaz, that I, Inez de Parma, high-born, beautiful, rich, beloved by hundreds of noble Spanish gentlemen, throw myself into your arms as a wife—wife of a ruffian of the arena—when I remember that I wonder that I do not die with shame."

"Oh," thought Pedro, "it was not my fault if she fell in love with the handsomest and boldest man in Spain. It is some glory for me to have been the husband of a noble countess. She means to kill me. I read it in her eyes. Is there no way of escape?"

"But," continued the countess, "regret is useless. I have ever expected that you would hunt me down, and I have made preparations for you. Not," she said, scornfully, "such preparations as a fond wife might always desire to make for a beloved husband, but such as to place you in my power or in your grave."

He never moved his flaming eyes from hers, nor she hers from his. There was so much bitter hatred for each other in their hearts that their eyes remained fixed.

"Had this chair failed to entrap you, wolf, in the snare, there are others as cunning made for you—yes, for you alone. I knew that if chance favoured you, you would hunt me down, blood-hound. Had you not come to-night as I requested, would I have waited until your dagger was at my heart? No, Pedro Diaz, you would have been found dead in your bed, or in the street. It is pleasant to sit before you and see you bound hand and foot, gagged, as helpless as any of those brutes you used to worry and slay in the arena of Madrid."

"If I had the time to spare, you would be a long time dying. Each day that I gave you to live I would thrust pins into your body until you were encased in a coat of mail. But time is very precious. I must begin."

Begin! begin what! to torture?

She arose and opened a small box which she took from one of the shelves.

The Portuguese watched her motions keenly. Brave to desperation he was, yet he felt a cold horror, a chilly terror creeping around his heart as he watched the deliberate slowness of his enemy.

He felt, perhaps, as the fly feels when caught in the web as the merciless spider begins to advance to the work of death.

The countess took from the box a phial and a sponge. The sponge she saturated with a liquid poured from the phial, after first putting on a pair of gloves.

"Now!" thought the Portuguese, "what does all this mean? Is it vitriol? And does she mean to paint my face with vitriol? Fiend!"

She left the box and advanced towards him, holding the sponge daintily between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand. She moved as if about to make an attack upon the wretch from the rear. He twisted his head to follow her motions. He struggled fiercely with his feet to move the chair to which he was bound, so as to avoid this rear attack.

He could not move the chair a single inch. For all the force he could use it was as if chained to the floor.

The vindictive woman evidently enjoyed his fears, or rather his agonies, for the horror of having his face mutilated nearly crazed him with rage and terror. She walked, or glided around him several times, as a hawk circles around its intended prey. She made feints of attack, rushing at him with extended fingers, then falling back just as he expected he knew not what, but something dreadful and devilish from that dripping sponge.

At length she sprang at him when his head was wrenched far back and aside to keep her in view. Her right hand seized his coarse black and gray hair, and with a strength he little expected, pressed his head against the back of the chair. In another instant, before he could wink, she had thrust the sponge into one of his eyes.

This done she released his head. In fact, the horrible pain inflicted upon him gave him so much strength that he jerked his head forward, leaving her hand full of his hair, torn up by the roots.

A roar, muffled, stifled by the cruel gag, rose from his lips.

This roar of agony, which sounded like the cry of a brute, was not made by the miserable Portuguese because of the pain. Tough, hardened ruffian as he was, he could endure bodily torture with the stoicism of the Delaware Indian. But more than pain made him roar.

A moment of effort to see with the assaulted eye told him that its power of seeing was destroyed, no doubt, for ever.

Then this terrible woman intended to blind him. Horrible! Of all fates cast upon unfortunate human wretches Pedro Diaz had ever esteemed blindness the most awful, most pitiable, most torturing. He had ever rejoiced in his fine, keen hazel eyes, eyes which could pierce distance twice as far as the common power of men; eyes strong, vigilant, never betraying, ever guarding him from that host of dangerous enemies ever upon his track in the name of the law.

To be deprived of his eyes was to be as helpless as an infant. True, she had destroyed the sight of but one, yet she had already returned to the box and was again saturating the sponge.

His other eye was to be attacked, and, no doubt, destroyed. He could not resist—he was as strong as a man, as active as a juggler. He would try to keep his remaining eye closed. She had destroyed his other before he suspected her intention.

He could not cry out, for the gag was perfect. He would not groan, because that would please this malicious woman, who took delight in his agonies.

He rolled his eyes here and there, hoping desperately for escape from the fearful fate he saw being so deliberately prepared for him.

The room, though small, was quite lofty, and upon

one side, near the ceiling, was a small window, fashioned there, no doubt, for ventilating this and other apartments.

At the window, looking down upon the dreadful scene below, the Portuguese saw a face full of affliction—a pale, fear-struck face, yet a beautiful face—the face of a charmingly young woman.

"It is she whom they call Carola," thought Pedro Diaz. "I have seen her often in the street. I recognise her. She is terrified—perhaps she has been imprisoned in the next room. She cannot aid me. She dares not make her presence as a spectator known—at least, she witnesses the cruelty of this vile woman. Ah, maiden! when you were stolen in Spain I little dreamed that you would see Pedro Diaz blinded—blinded alive by Inez de Parma. This must be fate."

Yes, Carola was witnessing the vengeance of Inez de Parma upon Pedro Diaz. The maiden had soon revived from her swoon, and whether the drug administered by Dr. Kampton was weak in its power, or her constitution too strong to be long enchained in unconsciousness—she was in full possession of her faculties within an hour after being left alone.

Her active mind soon comprehended her situation. She remembered the cowardly attack made upon her by Kampton, and the unpleasant taste in her mouth convinced her that she had swallowed some powerful drug. She recognised, after a tedious examination in the dark, the room in which she was confined, a room seldom used, and filled with old furniture.

The time had passed painfully slow to her as she reflected upon her situation. She could not tell how long she had slept, perhaps but a few minutes, perhaps for hours. But she knew that her only safety from the machinations of Laura Parnail and Robert Kampton lay in speedy flight.

She believed that Alfred Raymond and his father would rescue her the next day, if any one could, yet she feared the violent wickedness of Laura Parnail. Foremost was the fear that the desperate rascal, Kampton, would, that night, humiliate her for ever. If he dared to assault her as he had, would he not dare to do more?

Speedy escape, therefore, was imperative. The door was impassable, the windows were barred. The room was admirably adapted for a prison.

Much time was lost in vain plans, until her eye saw rays of light streaming through a window which she had forgotten. The light came from the lamp burning in the adjoining apartment, that in which Inez de Parma tortured Pedro Diaz.

But when Carola discovered the light Pedro Diaz had not entered the trap set for him. Active and daring, she climbed to the top of the tall-posted bed, and being then able to reach to the sill of the window, she drew her body up until she could see into the adjoining room.

To remain long in this position, all her weight supported by her hands above, was impossible; but in moving her feet about they encountered a strong iron spike fastened into the wall. Upon this she rested her feet, and thus was enabled to support herself at the window without much fatigue, and with no danger of falling.

The window had neither sash nor shutters, and though the wall was very thick, she was able to see what was going on below.

Therefore Carola Fairmont had seen and heard all that we have narrated, after the entrance of Pedro Diaz.

What she heard amazed her, for she heard Laura Parnail called Countess Inez de Parma, and the mother of the hateful Dr. Robert Kampton. She learned that she, herself, was the daughter of a duke and duchess; that Laura Parnail, late her supposed aunt, had stolen her during her infancy; that her noble father and mother were at that moment in England seeking her; that Pedro Diaz had offered to restore her to them; that he had once been the husband of Inez de Parma; that Robert Kampton intended to wed her by force, and she saw him leave the apartment to seek some degraded priest or minister to perform the mockery of a marriage ceremony.

She witnessed, also, with speechless horror, the vindictiveness of the evil countess; yet a weird fascination held her attention to the same.

She saw Pedro Diaz raise his eyes to hers. If the sight of either was destroyed, she could not detect it, though the bright glare of the lamp fell broadly upon his face. She imagined, however, that one eye was injured or destroyed, as he kept that one rigidly closed until he perceived her.

Then he opened it, but to close it again. Evidently it pained him dreadfully to keep it unclosed.

He stared at her for but a moment, and then resumed his watch upon the movements of Inez de Parma. Carola, too, turned her gaze upon the revengeful woman.

Inez de Parma, whose whole mind was absorbed in her schemes of vengeance, had again saturated the sponge, and, laughing harshly, turned towards her victim.

"You have lost but one, Pedro," she said, as she renewed her hawk-like approach towards revenge; "but you must lose the other. Do not think that I care for my promise to our son. I intend to deprive you of all power to escape, or, that in case you escape you shall never use those eyes to injure me. I may spare your life, Pedro, but certainly I shall not spare your sight. But if I spare your life it will be not merely with the loss of your eyes. When you leave that chair the brutal strength in which you rejoice shall have been taken from you for ever."

"Ah, what do you threaten!" thought the Portuguese.

"If I see fit to spare your life, assassin, it will be after I have forced you to swallow drugs which will destroy your muscles, make you a crippled, whining, helpless, crawling invalid, for the life that may be given to you."

He closed his eyes as soon as he saw her begin to approach him, for that was his only means of defence. Means of offence he had not.

It was a terrible scene for Carola to witness, yet a species of horrid fascination riveted her gaze upon the fierce struggle which ensued.

The fettered Portuguese fought with his head with the pertinacity of despair, yet the countess overcame him at last, forced open his eyelids, and darted the envenomed sponge against the eye-ball.

Then, for the second time, Pedro uttered that brute-like roar of agony and despair, and Carola saw the triumphant countess leave her vanquished victim to glare at him with eyes flaming with fiendish exultation.

So much of her intended vengeance was accomplished. Pedro Diaz was blind. Should he escape ere she completed her revenge he would no longer be a formidable enemy.

Inez de Parma replaced the sponge and gloves in the box, and stood for a moment motionless, observing the Portuguese.

He too, was motionless. His eyes were opening and closing, but she knew that their sight was destroyed for ever, and that within a few hours they would wither and shrivel, and become mere masses of senseless jelly—dull, glazed, wrinkled, useless.

"I leave you now," she said, in a calm, cruel voice, through which thrilled a tone of exultation. "It may be hours before I visit you again, or perhaps days. At least, your reflection will entertain you. You said that you had friends who would seek you. I know that the boast was a lie. Pedro Diaz never had a friend."

With these words she took the key of the door from his vest, and left the room, locking it on the outside, as if she feared he might still escape, though bound, gagged, and blind.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

SUBMARINE CABLES.—Sir William Thomson announces an important discovery touching the art of laying submarine cables. He has found a mode by which a fault existing in the coiled part of the cable on board ship, scarcely recognisable as an incipient flaw, will make a sudden and decisive indication after it passes out of the tank, and before it reaches the pulley at the stern. The alarm will thus be given in time to stop the cable and remedy the defect.

THE DOUBLE-SCREW IRON-CLAD TURRET CERBERUS, 4,200 horse-power, is in dock at Chatham, for the alteration of her turrets, and the fitting of a temporary upper fore and aft deck, which will be carried above the turrets, and which is considered necessary to enable her to be navigated to Australia. She will also receive temporary masts, and some alterations will be made in her rudder.

DRIVING PILES BY GUNPOWDER.—An improved pile-driving machine has been invented by a Mr. Shaw. Hand and steam are superseded in this invention by gunpowder, which, by its explosion, excited by the fall of a hammer on a small quantity of fulminate, in cartridges fed into a cylinder, causes a recoil of the cylinder, which forces the pile into the ground. The cartridges can be thrown in at the rate of 50 per minute, and the hammer is thus kept going without a lever. The charges of powder are said to be only one-third of an ounce each. The hammer is one 675 lb. weight; it is thrown 8 ft., and exerts a force on the head of the pile equal to a dead weight of 300,000 lb.

COVERING WALLS WITH GLASS FOR PROTECTION OF FRUIT TREES.—In a paper read at the Manchester Congress, July 22, 1869, it was said: Where there are walls with a southern aspect in gardens, a covering of glass will be found the cheapest and most cer-

tain way of securing crops of the finer fruits, such as peaches, nectarines, and apricots. When the new kitchen garden was planned at Welbeck, a range of south wall, nearly 800 ft. long, was covered with glass on a novel principle. All the framework is of iron, and the roof made on the ridge-and-furrow mode, and glazed with strong plate glass, cast on purpose to suit the curve in the roof. The openings for top ventilation are made in the back wall, and every alternate light in front is opened and shut by machinery worked from the inside. The height of the back wall inside is 13 ft.; in the front, 7 ft. 6 in., and the inside width 7 ft. 4 in. This structure is heated by hot water pipes, and these were found very useful this spring, for good crops of peaches and nectarines have been secured, as well as plenty of cherries, plums, and pears grown in pots. Fire-heat is only used at the time they are blooming, or in the autumn, to ripen the wood, as the object of this structure is to get a succession of peaches and nectarines after the hot-house ones are over.

THE AURORE BOREALIS.

It has been asserted that auroras are the regular precursors of certain wonderful atmospheric phenomena. But there is not that strict agreement among the various views propounded which is desirable if real use is to be made of such prognostications. In 1772 Mr. Winn presented to the Royal Society a memoir, in which he sought to prove that the aurora borealis invariably presages a tempest from the south or south-east. But Kantz is of opinion that no such law really holds. Too much is now known of the enormous range of country over which auroras are often simultaneously visible to permit us to draw so definite a conclusion. He considers, however, that brilliant auroras, darting long rays, may be looked upon as commonly the precursors of violent gusts of wind, and of extraordinary irregularities in the distribution of heat over the earth's surface. We do not propose to speculate on the causes of auroras, because as yet the subject has been too little explored to enable a theory to be established on a satisfactory basis. We know that there is an association between the aurora and terrestrial magnetism, and thus we can readily assign electricity as the origin of the appearances presented to us.

We can also indicate with every probability the minute icy particles which form the light feathery clouds of the upper regions of air as the true seat of the electric action. But how this action is generated, and in what way it operates, we have at present no satisfactory means of ascertaining. It has been thought that as other planets besides the earth must be subject to magnetic forces corresponding to those which we include under the general term terrestrial magnetism, it might be possible for the astronomer, under favourable circumstances, to become aware of the existence of auroral displays taking place on those bodies.

We could not hope, of course, to witness auroras on Mars or Jupiter, or any of the planets whose paths lie outside the earth's, because these bodies turn always their illuminated hemispheres towards us. But Mercury and Venus, whose paths lie within the earth's, are often seen as mere sickle-shaped threads of light, and there seems nothing to prevent our discerning an auroral display on these planets, whenever one of unusual splendour happened to be in progress, especially as, on account of their nearness to their sun, we may reasonably suppose that all magnetic phenomena are presented upon them with much greater intensity than on our own earth. Also, as these bodies occasionally pass across the disc of the sun, at which time their unilluminated hemisphere is seen by us as a black spot, it seems at first sight that we might fairly hope to see signs of auroral phenomena during the progress of a transit of either planet. Indeed, the faint spots of light which our most eminent observers have detected upon these bodies when crossing the sun's face have been assumed by some to be indicative of auroral displays. But in reality this view must be abandoned, or held, at the least, to be highly improbable.

It must not be forgotten that when a planet is crossing the sun's disc we can only watch the phenomenon by greatly reducing the sun's light. And there can be no doubt whatever that the means we employ to reduce the splendour of the sun's light, so that the eye can look without pain upon his disc, must suffice to blot out altogether any light we could reasonably assign to auroral displays upon either of the interior planets.

A NEW DISCOVERY.—A discovery has been made in India which renders it not impossible that not only may Sir John Thwaites and his boon companions be able to resume those banquets which poverty has for a time so ruthlessly cut short, but that the Metropolitan Board of Works may actually succeed in

setting the Thames on fire at last. It seems that sewage may be utilised by being converted into gas. Experiments have been successfully tried at Darjeeling and Calcutta, and it is now proposed to apply the process to some of the larger cities. The gas must be much better than that supplied by our gas companies at home, for it is said "to burn brightly"—a compliment which cannot be paid to the expensive commodity which helps only to make darkness visible with us. Instead, therefore, of gazing through tears on an apolluted river and a bankrupt Board of Works, we may look forward to a pellucid stream, a wealthy Corporation, and a brilliantly lighted city with a diminished gas rate. There will also be one inestimable advantage to be derived from the adoption of the scheme. By blending our gas-pipes with our drains it will only be necessary to dig up our thoroughfares once, instead of twice, a month.

DISCOVERY OF THE WEIGHT OF AIR.

ALL bodies except heat have weight; the proof of which is that a leathern bottle weighs more when filled with air than it does when empty. It was, I believe, on this experiment that Aristotle founded his assertion of the gravity of air; and the only ground on which men of science based their opinion that the merit of the discovery was not due to him was, that in endeavouring themselves to test the truth of this assertion, many of them failed to detect any difference in weight between a bladder filled with air and one entirely empty. Such were the arguments used till the time of Galileo; then by the exact measurement of the gravity of air, the failure of Aristotle's experiment could be accounted for; and, during the present century, in all elementary books in which the barometer is mentioned the vain attempt of Aristotle to measure the real weight of air is also spoken of. But it appears now that the arguments used by the philosopher's enemies failed to prove what they really intended. Of course they are right if they can demonstrate that he experimented with air at the same pressure as that of the atmosphere. But what grounds have they for such an opinion? Is it that they attribute to Aristotle what are, in reality, the failures and mistakes of his followers? We have, on the one side, the clear assertion that all bodies except heat, possess weight; and, on the other, Aristotle furnishes us with a process for the verification of this statement, which consists in weighing, not an extensible bladder, but an almost inextensible leathern jar successively full and empty of air. Now, what conclusion are we to arrive at from such premises? That it is impossible to succeed? Or might it not be more correct to say that by a process the details of which have not been transmitted to us, Aristotle himself succeeded in proving the gravity of air, while the attempts of his followers to do the same resulted in failure? For myself, I believe that the great philosopher, by means of a blowpipe, confined in his leathern jar more air than it would contain at the normal pressure; and, after weighing it, first empty and then full, he found such a difference that he could positively assert the gravity of air.

In these days, when *a priori* arguments are so decided, we may be allowed to dissent from a similar reasoning which would rob antiquity of its glories. Therefore, instead of saying: "Although Aristotle stated that air was heavy, he tested it by a wrong process which tended rather to prove the contrary," it would be more just to say: "Although Aristotle made use of a process, which, at first sight, appears a wrong one, yet, as we find that by the supposition of compressed air he might succeed, we conclude that he discovered the truth, since it was he who asserted the fact."

A. A. H.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE MAGNET.—Photography is now the constant and untiring observer. One of the prettiest perhaps the prettiest of all, of the application of the light-drawing process is that to the automatic registration of the movements of delicate instruments, such as magnets and galvanometer needles. Well-nigh all meteorological instruments are now made to record their own actions; but some of these are moved by force so strong that they can mark their course mechanically, by pencil upon paper. For instance, the gyrations of a wind-vane are forcible enough to rub a marking-point upon a traversing-card; the pressure of wind upon a plate, and the weight of a column of mercury in a barometer-tube are sufficient to move pencils and make them score their variations. The friction of the marker is not felt in these cases. But when we come to magnets whose movements can be arrested by a cobweb, mechanical tracing is out of the question. Here photography steps in. By fixing a concave mirror to the magnet, a spot of light from a neighbouring gas-flame is formed at a short distance from the reflector; and every tiny twist of the bar is rendered visible by a displacement of the light spot. If, then, a sheet of sensitive paper be placed to receive the spot, and made by clockwork to travel

slowly in a direction transverse to that of the magnet's swing, it will be impressed at every instant with the shifting beam, and there will be produced a wavy or zigzag line, which will be, in effect, the trail of the magnet.

THE PATENT-OFFICE.—From the report of the Commissioners of Patents, which has just been issued, we find that the number of applications for letters patent recorded within the year 1868 was 3,991; the number of patents passed thereon was 2,490; the number of specifications filed in pursuance thereof was 2,456; the number of applications lapsed or forfeited, the applicants having neglected to proceed for their patents within the six months of protection, was 1,501; the number of patents void, the patentees having neglected to file specifications in pursuance thereof was 34. Thirteen thousand one hundred and one patents bear date between the 1st October, 1862, and the 31st of December, 1868. The additional progressive stamp duty of 50*l.* was paid at the end of the third year, on 3,692 of that number, and 9409 became void and the additional progressive stamp duty of 100*l.* was paid at the end of the seventh year, on 1,274 of the 3,692 remaining in force at the end of the third year, and 2418 became void. Consequently about 70 per cent. of the 13,101 patents became void at the end of the third year, and about 90 per cent. became void at the end of the seventh year. The proportionate number of patents becoming void by reason of nonpayment continues nearly the same to the present time. The commissioners again urge the necessity of a suitable building for museum and library; and the previously suggested site of Fife House is again recommended, and a plan is added showing the approaches which would have to be constructed were the suggestion adopted.

ATLANTIC TELEGRAPHS.—The British Association at Exeter has furnished the following news:—"Mr. Varley has invented a new and excessively cheap kind of cable, which costs less than a quarter the price of the present Atlantic cables to manufacture, and already active steps are being taken to lay one or two of these between England and America; so before long there is a probability that we shall have a glut of Atlantic cables. Little or nothing was said of the French Atlantic telegraph at the British Association, but Mr. F. H. Varley, F.R.S., read a paper upon some of the electrical machinery used in the last expedition." Since the foregoing paragraph was written the company has been formed under the presidency of Earl Ponlett, and it is intended to run the cable from the south-west coast of Ireland to Halifax in Nova Scotia, that is to say, direct from these islands to the mainland of America. So light is the cable that a great vessel like the Great Eastern will not be required to lay it, and its contract price will not exceed 450,000*l.*, which will give a high rate of profit, at half the charge for messages of the existing Atlantic telegraph companies. The contract will probably be made with the India-rubber and Telegraph Works Company at Silvertown. All the stated advantages depend, of course, upon the new invention in the shape of a cheap cable. It is of very curious and simple construction, as will be seen when we describe it hereafter, and for a long time it has been severely examined and tested by Sir William Thomson, who gives unqualified testimonials as to its merits. In a few days the prospectus of the "Ocean Telegraph Company" will be published.

M. ARAGO was the first to observe that a wire, when traversed by a powerful current, and plunged into iron filings, retained around it considerable quantity—a mass of the thickness of a quill.

ADVANCE OF CIVILISATION.

AMONG the penalties we pay for the advance of civilisation, the growing tendency to morbidness of mind is one of the most common, and at the same time one of the most exacting. The progress of intelligence, although mainly connected with the outward world, has made us more sensitive to ourselves, and hence more liable to magnify those thoughts and feelings which are self-regarding. Our great-grandfathers were wiser than we in the art of managing themselves. Outside things were outside; nor did they see their images in all objects that filled heaven and earth. Facts were facts, and truths were truths, by reason of their own nature. But with us facts and truths are such because of their adaptations to our consciousness. The habit of our times is to view the world as little else than a reflex of ourselves; and thus, by making pets of our opinions, fancies, aspirations, and projects, they obtrude themselves for ever on our reflections, until we become victims to a morbid self-esteem.

It were wrong to charge such persons with an inflated sense of their own importance. They are not necessarily proud or vain. Often they are humble-minded, shrinking from publicity, courting the

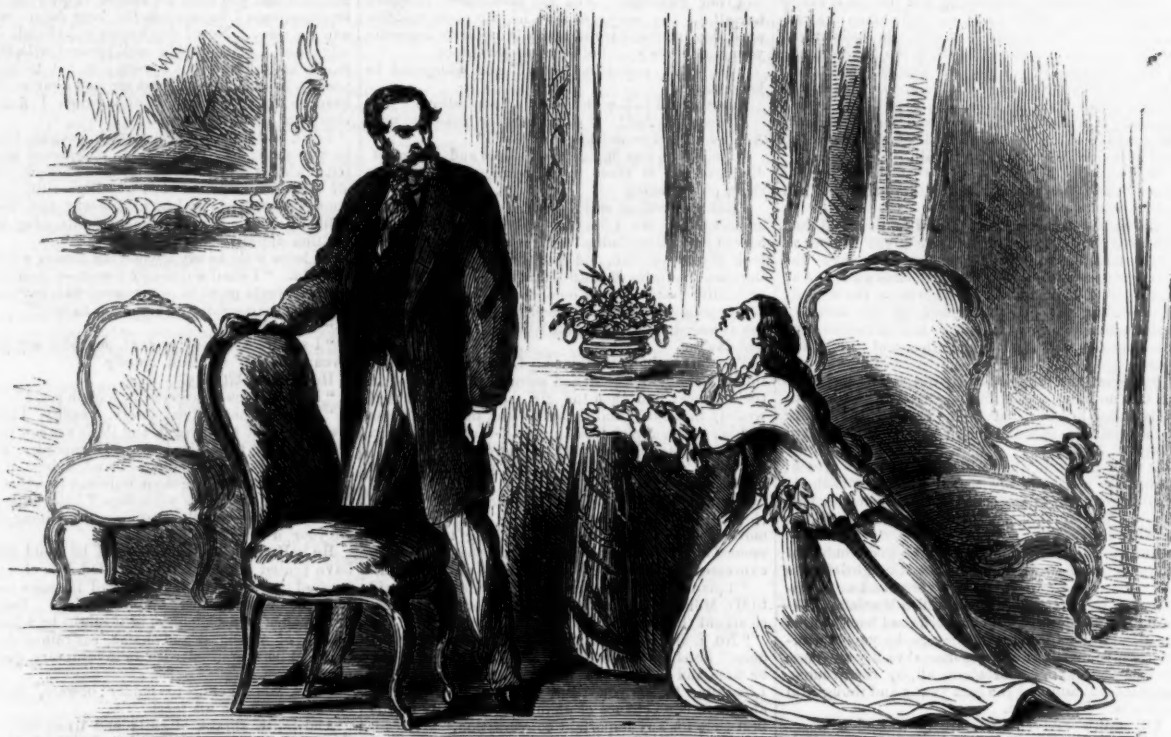
sheltering privacy of life, and loving solitude as the Sabbath of their hearts. Owing in part to acute physical sensibility, and in part to that kind of involuntary culture which is going on in most thoughtful natures, they fall into the habit of communion with themselves, simply because they thereby get the intensest forms of sentiment and passion. It seems to them that this is the best way to live, to grow, to attain the ends of being; and doubtless they have some truth on the side of their view. But they forget that this mysterious nature of ours is intent on holding fast to its mysteries; that it will not tolerate too much familiarity; that it binds the obscuring veil closer about its secrets; and, moreover, that we are most happy, most considerate, and most serviceable to others when we most ignore our own experiences, and go abroad in search of duty and the means of life both inward and outward.

A thoroughly healthy mind is the rarest of possessions. Among our women it is seldom seen; but this should not surprise us when we take into account the fact that modern life has added largely to their resources of thought, widened their sphere of activity, and in a corresponding degree quickened their sense of individual responsibility. To them home is much more of a world, and the world much more of a home than ever before. In many respects this is a great gain, but it has serious evils; and hence, while no argument can be logically drawn from the evils to impeach the good, yet it becomes us to see if we cannot lessen the drawbacks, and thus secure better and fuller advantages.

Some women become morbid by thinking constantly of what they are expected to be. It is an age of high demands on womanhood, and they are well aware of the enormous demands made on their character, accomplishments, skill, and elegant services. From early girlhood they are trained to believe that they must come up to a lofty standard; and no sooner do they enter the active world than they see plainly enough that society depends on their ministrations for its highest pleasures. To be sensible, inevitably sensible on all occasions; to be keenly expert in all ready arts of contrivance and comfort; to economise in the kitchen and entertain in the parlour; to be an ideal, and yet to be severely real—this is the terror that besets them. How can they reconcile the apparent contrarieties. "Multum in parvo" is alarming, and "E Pluribus Unum," applied to domestic and social offices, is overwhelming. The result is that many women undertake to be too much. The mind is overstrained to meet unreasonable expectations, and this modern tyranny of ideal women works havoc among those who, most sensitive to duty and impulsive aims, are sure to be most completely sacrificed. On this subject public opinion is half crazy, and women would be most womanly in resisting the rabid extortion. If they can shine as stars, well and good; if they can shine as the moon, better still; if they can shine as the sun, that is best of all; but save them from trying to shine as stars, moon, and sun all at once.

Other women are led into morbidness by dwelling too anxiously on what they suppose themselves expected to do. Of late years the Church, benevolent institutions, and practical organisations for usefulness have laid no light duties on their hearts. Nor can it be doubted that in these spheres of action they have rendered immense service to various enterprises. No one would hinder them in good works, and especially in those good works that belong by nature to womanly sympathy, and yet it must be confessed that philanthropy has its temptations and usefulness—its dangers for even the noblest womanhood. They fall easily into the imaginative excitements of these humanitarian schemes, concentrate on specific evils, forget the true sentiment of benevolence in the work engaging their attention, exaggerate personal agency, and lose the sweetness of private worth in public deeds. Such labours always entail more or less sharp trial and grievous disappointment. The sturdiest men have to be on the watch against the corroding influence of philanthropic effort. But women, if disappointed in such endeavours, are apt to grow more intense, and not unfrequently less amiable. A woman is generally surprised unless she attain her object, and hence failure strikes deeply into her heart, and reveals itself in injuries to her character. And, moreover, the evil in the world, if dashed rudely against her sensibilities, is very likely to generate some bitterness of intolerance, some hasty revulsions, some chronic rebellion against the confused and jarring economy of things under which we are living. Morbidness is one of a woman's greatest enemies. It soon becomes a disease—a fierce and feverish consumption, that destroys the strength and beauty of her life. Let her not fail to work; but let her work unconsciously and self-forgetfully, for not otherwise can she have a security against an evil that does her fearful harm.

H. U.



[EDITH'S SUPPLICATION.]

EVELYN'S PLOT.

CHAPTER XVI.

The world is still deceived with ornament.
In law what plea so tainted and corrupt
But being seasoned with a gracious voice
Obscures the show of evil. *Shakespeare.*

It was now full season in the famed baths of Germany. The sick and the sorrowful were resorting there for health, and for diversion from melancholy reveries or anxious prospects. The gay and the vigorous for fresh stimulus to the pale appetites, that were well-nigh satiated and disgusted by the twice and thrice repeated daily routine of the "seasons" of the metropolis of their respective countries.

And some there were who went for other and less innocent purposes than for restoration from mental or bodily pain, or the new and as yet untasted ingredients in the monotonous cup of pleasure. There were some who went for the disgraceful and unprincipled business of making a prey of the unwary, of amassing unhalloved gains at the expense either of the easily gulled, or the rash and reckless resorters to the gay scene.

And not only was this an unusually gay scene for the frequenters of Baden Baden, but there were some features that appeared to distinguish it from the usual routine of the influx of visitors. One of the largest "hotels" (*maisons*) in the place had been taken by a gentleman of uncommon fascination and courtesy of manners, as well as of immense wealth and of great liberality.

Such, at least, were the characteristics which the habits and arrangements of Mr. Louis Mordaunt bespoke. The furniture of the house in question was of a character that had in past years satisfied the requirements of an English baronet, an Italian prince and a French duc. But Mr. Mordaunt was of a different opinion, or more difficult to please.

The "replenishing" (as our northern countrymen call it) of the house was absolutely the talk of Baden circles. Everything that bore the slightest tinge of the plain or the loose character that the furniture of mansions inhabited by a succession of tenants will at times wear, was banished, and the articles that replaced it were of the most *richeché* description. Heavy curtains of Utrecht velvet, relieved by the richest and most fairy-like laces, shaded windows, that had been formerly content with English damask or Swiss muslins. The polished floor was laid down with rich and thick Aubusson carpets, and the mirrors and pier glasses were so multiplied that

any movement of the tenants was reflected or exhibited, and perhaps exaggerated a dozen times over.

Tables and cabinets of *marqueterie*, statues and statuettes, *bijouterie* and pictures, flowers and fountains. Such were the luxuries and the gratifications that were provided in the utmost profusion and perfection in the house of Mr. Mordaunt.

The natives wondered; the visitors to the spot rejoiced. There was a rivalry and jealousy to get to Mr. Mordaunt's parties, and to obtain the *entrée* to those more select evenings which were the most coveted and especial privilege of the few among his acquaintance. And, indeed, there was something unusually attractive in these same reunions, for not only was the music of an exquisite and rare character, but the "sight" supper was costly enough to have supplied three times the amount of a less exquisite character. And—there was a room for more exciting pleasures, of which we will speak hereafter.

But there was an attraction more powerful than the wines and delicate viands, more fair than the luxuries and beautiful objects by which one was surrounded; more sweet-voiced than the syrens who aided the amateur performers in the flood of harmony that filled the apartment on these rare gala nights. And that attraction was the presence of a young and beautiful girl.

There was undoubtedly a gathering of beautiful women in Baden that year. Brunettes and blondes—English and Italians—Germans and Gauls, were in abundance in those gay saloons; but fairest and gayest—and what was, perhaps, a yet greater charm—rare in the gatherings which took place nightly in the saloons, was the fair ward of Mr. Mordaunt. And she was in a few brief words the rage. Wherever Miss Mordaunt moved, whether in the theatre, the ball-room, the drive or promenade, she was ever the centre of attraction to the sterner sex.

And, by the way, it is a matter of wonder why that epithet is used. Certainly there may be more strength, more firmness among men than among women. But perhaps, also, it is rather the strength of purpose than of endurance; the firmness of pressure than of will which distinguishes men from women.

Were a balance to be struck among the unhappy marriages, the shortcomings, the broken hearts of the world, it is a very doubtful point to which the preponderance would be assigned. The petty complaints, the fretful tempers, the droppings that wear away stone, attending the so-called softer sex.

In the quarrels that make up married life it may be doubted whether the husband is not usually the first to yield, whether the wife is not the most petu-

lant, the least generous, the most taunting of the combatants.

Think of that, ye denizens of the world, who occupy the places of honour assigned by courtesy and favour rather than by right; who enjoy the fruits of honest toil, who receive the protection of men's strength, and who glory in the homage paid by men's devotion. Think of the terms on which you ought to hold this pre-eminence, the duties that belong to this prerogative.

And strive, as much as feeble frail human nature will allow, to deserve the epithets that are lavished on you, and to be indeed the soft and gentle and loving woman, rather than the tyrants and the tormentors of the "sterner" in name, but submissive in reality, masculine portion of the creation.

The fair Edith Mordaunt had made a literal *furor* among the denizens of Baden Baden. The golden hair, transparent, child-like skin, the brilliant blue eyes were such a contrast to the dark, sallow complexion, the dark brown hair, the brown, heavy languid orbs that prevailed among the native German or Italian or the French women who frequented the saloons and the promenades; while the half-child-like coquetry, the careless vivacity, the piquant indifference that marked the girl's demeanour was equally unlike the affected *hauteur* or the thinly-veiled eagerness for admiration that marked the majority of the belles of the famed Spa.

And thus the girl's novelty and her extreme beauty combined to win for her at once a notoriety and an admiration which was the more lavishly bestowed from the indifference with which it was received.

Edith was strangely careless in her deportment, even to the most distinguished and eligible of her admirers. If they at all pressed their homage it was haughtily repelled, and if their compliments or their *petite soins* were graciously received in a favourable mood by the young beauty, there was still a careless, half contemptuous air in the sharp badinage which came yet so gracefully and so lightly from her lips that it but added to her charms.

Some said she was already betrothed to a secret but distinguished lover. Others that she was privately engaged or married to the guardian who kept so silken and yet so firm a rein over the young girl's fancies and movements. And a third party decided that the damsel had too insatiate a vanity to be content with the homage of one, and therefore kept a number in her train by this attractive coldness.

In any case Edith Mordaunt was at once the most inscrutable and the most bewildering of the beauties or the *belles esprits* who frequented the crowded gatherings of Baden Baden.

Among the most persevering and the least easily daunted of her admirers was an Englishman of a certain age and equally certain wealth, who had arrived in Baden about the same time with the Mordaunts.

Mr. Osborne was a retired English merchant; one of the few who have amassed fortunes in an unusually small space of time, and by still less known means. It is not the place here to describe precisely the mode in which gold had rolled round, and swelled and gathered like a large snowball.

But, at least, we may imply that it had been at some risk to himself and loss to others that this had been accomplished.

He was a bachelor, too. No wife, no child had hindered the progress of the one great interest of money making, no domestic cares and expenses had hampered the saving of the wealth thus made. And now at forty, or it might be a little more, the wealthy Mr. Osborne was fairly launched on the ocean of fashionable life, into which he had diverged from the surging waves of speculation and profit and loss.

But even now the old spirit did not desert him. He had no fancy for taking what would be emphatically called a bad bargain—no intention to embark in a profitless speculation in the market of matrimony.

It was probable that marriage was his present view. It was probable that the wealthy bachelor would now seek to recompense himself for his past years of hard devotion to Plutus by the pleasanter noose of Cupid.

But at least the blindness of the god would not descend to his worshipper. The thoughtlessness and impetuosity of a youthful lover would not be rivalled by the mature admirer of Edith Mordaunt. Accordingly, the wealthy Mr. Osborne had been angled for in vain by ladies of suitable age, by young damsels intent on gratifying that personal vanity and taste for splendid luxury, and above all, by the prudent mammas and aunts of the said young and thoughtful aspirants. But in vain.

Till Edith arrived he scarcely wasted a dozen words on any creature that wore a petticoat, and till he became an *habitué* at her guardian's he scarcely cared to be seen twice in any but the most public and fashionable haunts of the visitors of the place.

But then all changed. From the day when he was introduced to the fair young girl he scarcely left her side whenever he could find an opportunity of dogging her footsteps; he turned over the music when she sang; he counted the time when she, at rare intervals, joined the dance. He was ever ready with her cloak at opera, *fête* or ball. And what was more annoying to the young girl he was a constant inmate of their house.

Mr. Mordaunt invited him on every real or invented pretext, till he became a regular *habitué* of the house, and a place was kept for him at every public or private gathering.

In vain the girl strove to repel and put a bar on this rapidly increasing intercourse. It was a stream that she had no power to stem.

CHAPTER XVII.

In a shooting saloon,
On silken cushions half reclined
I watch thy grace, and in its place
My heart a charmed slumber keeps,
While I muse upon thy face;
And a languid fire sweeps
Through all my veins. Tennyson

As well have resisted the strong but certain advance of a still tidal river as the quietly but steadily closing in of this intimacy in the house of her guardian.

It was only in the latter part of the *recherché* evenings of which we have spoken, that Edith ever got rid of her leech-like admirer. In truth, it was a difficult—a very difficult process. For Mr. Osborne's courtship partook somewhat of the character of the Laird of Duabadies to "Jeannie Deans." He seldom required her attention, and rarely troubled her with compliments that she could repel, or with conversation that she could check with the mute rampart of monosyllables and silence.

No, it was the quiet, unobtrusive homage of a man who had formed his plans and feared not to fail in them; the provokingly calm confidence that actually daunted others from its own entire fearlessness.

Edith secretly fretted and half feared, but was compelled to bide her time for the disappointment of this annoying self-confidence on the part of her admirer.

Sometimes she imagined—more than she would confess to herself. Edith knew too much not to fear where such men as Ralph Osborne were concerned.

Yet his very age and worldliness gave her hope. One course she could use in extremity; and that she would not scruple to avail herself of rather than survive the hated formality of such a marriage.

Neither Ralph Osborne had yet alluded to it,

nor her guardian. And she sometimes despised herself for the very idea that he, the plain, middle-aged man, should dare to cast a thought on her—the young and lovely girl of scarcely seventeen.

"Ah, if he would but come!" she whispered to herself.

Then would follow the heartfelt aspirations: "Heaven forbid! It is no place for him—not yet! And even he does not know all—all!"

It had been one of the most select and the most distinguished of these small reunions which were the topic of Baden.

Edith had retired early. For there was generally an escape for her after the small supper had been served when those ladies who resorted to the *soirées* took their departure, and a chosen few adjourned to the conservatories of the brilliant suite of apartments, and Edith retired to her own chamber, as usual, unconscious, and perhaps unmindful of the hour when the remainder of the guests left that scene of guilt and danger.

The girl had not undressed. Only the gay robe—the few jewels that she had worn were deposited in their places; and then the girl had thrown herself wearily in a chair, and thought—and thought till she had fallen into a half-dreaming, half-waking slumber. A light tap at the door, and the words:

"May I come in, Edith?" in her guardian's voice aroused her.

For a moment a flush of resentment dyed her cheek. Then she drew her thick wrapping-gown more closely around her, and walking to the door opened it with the impatient gesture that too plainly expresses the unwelcome character of an intrusion.

"This is a strange hour for an interview," she said to Mr. Mordaunt, who had entered; "is the business so urgent that it will not keep till morning?"

"No, I always think it best to do these things at once," he said, carelessly. "In the morning I might be tired and sleepy, and then have to go out before I had time to see you. But now when all is quiet, and there is no chance of disturbance, it is by far the best time for any important conversation."

Edith made no reply. She only bowed coldly, and seated herself in the chair from which she had so lately risen.

The gentleman's face was slightly flushed, but there was no trace of excitement from wine in his manner. His step was as firm, and his eyes as clear and as brilliant as in the earliest hour of the morning.

"Edith," he said, "I came simply to announce what I have no doubt you fully expected to hear, that Mr. Osborne has proposed for you?"

She gave no answer, but her lips worked scornfully, as if in absolute derision of the intelligence.

"Therefore," he resumed, "my plans are somewhat altered, and though as yet I cannot fully determine on their modifications, it is certain that the period of our stay in Baden will most probably be shortened. I presume you will not object, as you will want to order the—"

But something in the lightning glance of the blue eyes arrested his speech.

"I imagine you are trifling with me," she said, proudly. "I cannot for an instant suppose you to be serious in what you would imply."

"If you mean that I am not serious in arranging for your marriage, you were never more deceived in all your life," he said, sharply. "I have accepted Ralph Osborne for you; and it is only a question whether I wish your marriage to take place at once or in a few months' time. I think he is serious enough to be trusted; he seems greatly captivated with you, Edith, and no wonder, for you are wonderfully improved since the London season brushed you up so completely."

Edith listened with a look of the utmost contempt in her face.

"You can scheme and arrange as you like, Mr. Mordaunt, since it is your pleasure to use that name, but my plans are rather more fixed than yours; and, therefore, they may perhaps clash more than you at present seem to foresee. I shall neither now, or at any latter period, marry Mr. Osborne; and you have no authority over me that can force me to do anything that is contrary to my inclinations."

"Indeed!" he replied, scornfully. "My child, I have every right—the right of purchase—of education—of support, of all that can give a man right over the dependent on his bounty. Did I not purchase you from the itinerant, the man who was making a living by the exhibition of the pretty dancing-girl? Did I not procure you masters in all that so pretty a girl needed to learn, and gave you every comfort and luxury till you were of an age to be taken as my companion? And was I not moderate and wise enough in my plans not to even dream of making you my wife as many a man to whom you owed so much would have done? And when you owe me all this you pretend to say that you will

not, and that you have no reason to obey me in the arrangements I have made for your future welfare and my own. Now I don't want to be harsh, especially when I am tolerably well pleased with the turn affairs are taking; but I warn you not to push me too far, or even my forbearance may wear as threadbare as were your own clothes when I first took charge of you."

Edith had listened with a wild, haughty contempt to the man's taunting words. It seemed as if she felt it almost a degradation to allow herself to be at all moved by such a base reptile. Still she was young—a woman—and in his power; and the more deliberately she thought, the more alarming did her position appear.

"I have little to say beyond my former assertion," she said. "I shall not marry a man—a man who has not one single point to recommend him save money, and who is especially disagreeable to me?"

"You will."

"I shall not, on any pretext, or under any possible circumstances," she said, quietly.

He laughed bitterly.

"How are you to prevent it, foolish girl?"

"Easily," she said, carelessly, "easily. There are many ways of stopping it, and these are not the days when girls are tyrannised over with impunity. You can but turn me from your doors; and, indeed, it would be the kindest and the most welcome fate that could happen to me, to leave a bondage I hate, to be spared a disgrace and a guilt that does not belong to me. Do your worst, I fear nothing."

He half rose, and seemed as if he could willingly have vented the rage that flooded his cheeks and swelled the veins of his forehead in some personal violence on this young, helpless being. But either the dread of consequences, or it might be a lingering feeling of manliness and shame, restrained the hand that had been uplifted with an involuntary gesture of passion.

"Girl, you anger me too boldly; beware," he hissed out from between his teeth.

And Edith shrank slightly and irresistibly under the compressed firmness which that look and tone betrayed.

The man took one or two turns up and down the room. Then he sat down again with, at any rate, the assumption of a more kindly and reasonable mood.

"Listen to me, Edith," he said, calmly. "You talk like a foolish child rather than the girl—woman which you have more than once proved yourself to be. You speak of being glad to leave my protection—to leave the luxuries, the gentle tending, the *prestige*, the elegancies that you have hitherto enjoyed? Do you know what you mean? Do you for a moment realise what it would be to leave all the belongings of the luxurious life you have hitherto led, and to be thrown on the world helpless, penniless, defenceless? You are too young and too pretty to be able to ask or to receive aid without a danger, from which, whatever may have been my faults in your eyes, I have as yet carefully guarded you. Child, be warned in time. One, far older and more experienced, and it might be, stronger than you, tried to defy me once. She was beautiful as yourself. I loved her, after my own fashion, but she dared her fate and I never saw her more after her path was chosen. In penury and in hardship, aye, and in disgrace and sorrow, that woman spent long, wretched days, weeks, and months, but I was not to be moved. Had she knelt to me I should have spurned her from me without one word, one look, or feeling of pity. Child, once more I would bid you submit to a fate that will be envied by many of more pretensions than yourself."

He had drawn his chair closer to hers and spoken in a low, monotonous, yet thrilling voice, as if he wished the words should reach her ears and sink deep into her heart.

Edith did listen, with her heart as well as her ears. She did understand all, and her resolution was soon taken.

"I can believe you," she said. "I can well believe you, but, though I know all that may thus await me it cannot change my resolution. Better hardship, poverty, death, than such a marriage; and in short, I will not consent. And that is my final answer."

He heard her calmly, far more calmly than she could have expected. Then he asked quietly:

"Had it been Cecil Rivers, what would have been your answer then?"

Her blue eyes glittered and flashed like Toledo steel till his own fell before the blaze. Then she said, haughtily:

"When Mr. Cecil Rivers asks me the question I shall know how to reply, and not till then."

"Yes, of course—I understand," he said, sneeringly. "I was not quite so blind as you might imagine to all that went on between you. But it's no go, Mademoiselle Edith; he has not so much as a brass farthing really belonging to him, and you may as well give up all thoughts of him altogether."

"Say, rather, that he ought never to have had thoughts of me, and that I was well deserving of all that I am now suffering from my cowardice and treachery, involuntary as it was. But from this hour it is at an end. I warn you, sir, that your game, so far as I am concerned, is over. From this day I will not be the instrument and tool of your plans. I will never have the ruin of another victim on my conscience. I will either altogether retire from this odious scene, or tell all—all."

And the girl turned scornfully from the half-terrified and astonished look bent on her by the man thus addressed.

Mr. Mordaunt, if such was his name, was silent for a few moments. He saw that the girl was not to be turned from her purpose by terror or threats, and that the only way to manage her was by an apparent yielding to her wilful caprice.

"Foolish child," he said, "foolish child; as if it were likely that I could part with the only charm of my home, or that Baden would submit tamely to the eclipse of its brightest ornament—its most glittering star."

The girl gave an impatient start.

"I hate it," she said, "I hate it all—all. I sickened at the admiration of these poor fools,—who little guess that the supposed ward and heiress of the rich Mr. Mordaunt is the purchased slave and tool of—"

He laid his hand on her lips, not roughly, but with the firm, sharp, sudden gesture that completely stopped all power of speech.

"Hush, girl, hush. Do not provoke me." I am not all a brute, and I shall be sorry if you urge me into any act, that I should repent afterwards. Listen to me, and let us stop this wild mischievous wrangling. Listen to me:

"If you will give me your word not to carry on in any way whatever, any correspondence with Cecil Rivers without my knowledge, or to allow him in any way to influence you, if he should again appear on the scene, then I in turn will engage that you shall not be tortured for at least some months by the suit of this wealthy millionaire. I don't want to part with you, child, still less to make you miserable, but I am not going to be ruined for your sake."

"Ruined," she said, "what is to prevent it? Child that I am, I know that it is but a question of time; you cannot persevere in your present course without a desperate end. What is that to me? I cannot avert it. I can but delay it, by the sins you force me to commit."

He shivered involuntarily.

The words of that inexperienced girl sounded in his ears almost like a prophecy uttered in that quiet silent hour.

"Foolish girl, what use is it to entertain such strange fancies," he said sharply. "What can you know of the future, or of my resources and plans. It is sufficient for you to understand that if I can carry out my present intentions the time will come when I shall need no help from you or from anyone to secure my future property and safety. Edith, it is not much that I ask of you. I only require that you should remain passive in all respects. If Cecil Rivers does reappear on the scene, then I shall reconsider my plans and purposes with regard to him. If not, then I ask very little in requiring that you should not hold any communication or correspondence with him. And in return I promise that the suit of Mr. Osborne shall be suspended between us for some months at any rate—it may be for ever."

Edith was young. And the young are buoyant and hopeful.

Time might work wonders, and if she could but gain three precious months, who could tell what might happen in their course.

At any rate, it was but small risk. She had neither prospect nor desire to open out a communication of the nature that her companion prohibited with Cecil. Her own sense of honour and womanly delicacy was too keen; and the memory of that last wretched night in London too vivid for her to feel any such hope or wish.

And if Cecil should re-appear—if he really loved her? If he were anxious to desire her for his own? What then?

Could the low-born, nameless dancing-girl of a strolling company—the purchased slave and ward of—a villain—could she be a fitting bride for the well-born, honourable and unstained Cecil. Unstained save by folly, and thoughtlessness. Unstained save by the yielding to temptation, that was the diabolical devising of the man she called her guardian.

It were well indeed to bind herself not to hold intercourse with him under such circumstances—well to guard herself against the weakness of her own heart.

"I will promise," she said, coldly, rather with the air of an empress conferring a favour than of a dependent yielding to necessity. "I will promise, but

mark me, it is not for you; not for your sake that I do it. It is simply to procure the rest that will enable me to think more calmly, and determine what will be right and best. Heaven help me! It is scarcely for me to talk of 'right' when my whole life has been one series of wrong, when it has been an actual lie; still I have not been wilfully wicked, and I will not be so—no, not to save my life nor yours."

And she covered her face with her hands, and the tears came reluctantly through her fingers, and the slight frame trembled and shook with the agitation that she strove to control.

He had gained his point now. He knew her well. He knew the strict honour of the untrained nature; he knew that she would have scorned a lie as she would a theft; he knew that she would never break her plighted word—no, not to save life!

He rose quietly, and moved a few steps from the chair.

"I will trust you," he said, "I will trust you. Now we understand each other. You will continue to receive Mr. Osborne as before, without reference to this subject. And I pledge my word that he shall never even allude to it in your hearing till you give him permission. And on the other hand you will of course continue to grace our meetings as you have done. I tell you, girl, that you may live yet to bless me for having taken you from misery and wretchedness, and given you at least the means of earning for yourself the station to which, it may be, you were born."

A quick flash came for a moment from her hastily uncovered eyes.

She looked anxiously at him.

"Tell me," she exclaimed, eagerly; "tell me, do you know? Can you tell me who I am? who were my parents? where those people obtained me? If you can—if you have the slightest clue to the truth, I will bless you to the longest day I live. I will forgive you, help you, work for you—do all but be his for you."

And she sank suddenly on the floor at his feet, and clasped his knees as if to hinder his retreat ere he had replied to her questions.

He disengaged himself, but without violence.

"Well, you can scarcely tell that," he said; "you can scarcely tell that. Suppose you were to be of base or ignoble birth, what then?"

She bowed her head in sad and dejected disappointment.

"But you spoke of station—the station to which I was born."

"Perhaps. But that did not imply that I knew aught about you. Those delicate hands, pure skin, and pretty features are scarcely of low and vulgar origin. And that was all my premises for what I have to say. There, don't be foolish, child; just do as I tell you; and perhaps in time all will have a brighter ending than you fancy. Now go to bed and sleep, for you have nothing to fear."

He bent down as if to touch her brow with his lips. But she shrank back in actual loathing, and he did not attempt to press his intention.

"Good night, Edith, or rather good morning. I may perhaps not see you till late in the day; but then I shall hope to find you blithe and gay, and as brilliant as ever at our party to-morrow evening. You have not forgotten—a large evening reception, you know. About seventy have accepted—drawn by the beauty and attractions of the fair Edith Mordaunt. Lucky girl."

And he closed the door.

Edith slowly rose from her reclining position, and walked to the glass. She saw the lovely young features that could not, even in the distress and the excitement of the hour, look aught but beautiful. She saw the golden shower of hair that had escaped from its coils and hung down the white wrapper, and about the white throat, like gold on mother of pearl. She saw the graceful form that was even more fully displayed in the loose dressing gown, than in the more elaborate toilette of the saloons. She gazed sadly on these girlish charms, and she detested the beauty that had entailed on her such misery.

"Oh, if I were but ugly!" she murmured in girlish impetuosity and impatience of tone. "If I were but ugly all this misery and disgrace would have been spared poor Edith."

True as she was in the feeling thus expressed it might well be doubted whether, had the option been given her, even at that moment, she would have exchanged her loveliness thus maligned, for a pair of lustreless grey eyes, red hair, a snub nose, and a mouth that extended from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

(To be continued.)

MDME. ADELINA PATTI is at Homburg, playing the sort of her operatic characters. After next season she will be lost to the Royal Italian Opera, having

signed a contract with her brother-in-law, Maurice Strakosch, for a tour in the United States and Canada for a year. She is to give 100 performances either in opera, oratorio, or in concerts, for the enormous sum of 400*l.* each representation, all her travelling expenses, including those of her husband and suite, to be paid by the speculator, who is to deposit 20,000*l.* as a guarantee with Rothchild Brothers, in Paris. To realize 40,000*l.* in eight months is a fabulous sum; not even Catalani nor Jenny Lind in their zenith ever commanded higher terms.

THE HAMPTON MYSTERY.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Thou art come to answer
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Incapable of pity, void and empty
From every draught of mercy. *Shakespeare.*

THE disguised Lady Beatrice started as Lord Adlowe entered his uncle's parlour, and instinctively put up her hand to lower her veil as he halted momentarily between her and the door.

The act immediately excited his lordship's attention, and he bestowed upon her a keen and curious glance.

He obtained, in the dim half-light, a glimpse only of a painfully white face, with cheeks on which a seemingly hectic flush burned hotly, a pair of gold-bowed spectacles, a mass of yellow hair combed low on a slightly wrinkled forehead, and two long yellow curls, and then the thick veil dropped, and her ladyship moved towards the threshold.

Adlowe's gaze followed her. As her ungloved hand, so small, so daintily white, with slender, tapering fingers, and pink, almond-shaped nails—contrasting so strongly with the assumed rotundity of her figure and pretended age—rested upon the door-knob, his lordship gave a slight start, and bent forward with a half-repressed eagerness.

The next moment the Lady Beatrice turned, bowed, and disappeared.

With an apparent consciousness that he had been guilty of rudeness, Lord Adlowe greeted Giralda and his uncle with profuse politeness, and then quietly sauntered to a window and looked down into the street.

"Who is that lady, uncle?" he inquired, carelessly, fixing his eyes upon a cab waiting below. "A recent acquaintance of yours, I suppose. I don't remember ever seeing her before."

"She is the mother of my adopted daughter, Adlowe," replied the marquis coldly—"the Countess of Arvalo."

Lord Adlowe uttered an ejaculation of surprise, and a strange expression, as of baffled cunning, gleamed for a moment in his pale eyes as he involuntarily retreated several steps from the window.

"That lady her mother!" he muttered, in tones of keen disappointment, half-aloud. "Impossible! Why I thought—I fancied—"

He checked himself abruptly, and returned to the window. His downward glance caught a glimpse of feminine drapery disappearing within the open door of the cab, and the next moment he beheld the vehicle depart at a rapid pace down the street.

"The Countess of Arvalo!" he exclaimed, flinging himself into the chair her ladyship had recently occupied, and looking from the marquis to Giralda, who had quietly turned on the gas-light and retreated to a distant corner. "The title is not familiar to me. Is her ladyship an Englishwoman?"

"She is an Englishwoman, married to a Spaniard of rank," replied Lord Trevalyan, adjusting his gouty foot. "Her ladyship is an actress, or *prima donna* in one of the metropolitan theatres."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Adlowe, significantly, as it seemed to the tortured-spirited Giralda. "I have not heard the name before."

"Her ladyship has a stage name, of course," said the marquis. "She would not have her title in everybody's mouth. That accounts for your never having heard of her, although an equally good reason might be found in your eight years' absence in the East."

"True," declared Adlowe, somewhat reluctantly, as if he were being convinced against his will. "Her ladyship," he added, "is a woman of striking presence. She has the majestic form suited to a 'Medea.' I fancied, however, that her hand, which strikingly resembles one I have seen somewhere lately in its perfect shape, colour, and delicacy, was too small to accord well with her person."

He directed a glance of gloomy suspicion at Giralda as he spoke, but the maiden's face was turned away

and he could not mark its expression. He observed, however, that her slight figure betrayed no mental disturbance.

If she was undisturbed, not so the marquis. He moved uneasily in his chair, thereby torturing himself, and exclaimed, testily:

"By the Lord Harry! things have come to a fine pass in these degenerate days, when every jackanapes can criticise the size of a lady's hand, and its proportion to her person. These are your foreign manners, sir. I suppose they are Oriental; but I want no more of them, sir. Do you hear? I want no more of them. Be kind enough to remember, my lord," and the tone of the marquis became intensely cutting, "that Miss Arevalo is my especial charge, being my adopted daughter, and that any remark concerning her or her relatives I shall regard as personal—as personal, sir!"

Lord Trevalyan sank back in his chair as he concluded, scowling upon his nephew and groaning with physical pain.

Adlowe hastened to make the required apologies, protesting that his remark had sprung from thoughtlessness.

"Humph!" ejaculated the marquis. "Thoughtlessness at your age! A giddy, thoughtless boy of forty! Humph!" and he sneered. "Just touch that bell, Adlowe," he added. "I want that wretched Rigby to help me into an easy position. I am in agony."

Lord Adlowe performed the required service, and the sleek valet made his appearance. Giralda noticed, at his entrance, that a subdued and stealthy glance of recognition and meaning passed between the noble visitor and the valet, and she immediately sprang to the conclusion that there existed between the couple a secret acquaintance. She stored away the fact for future use.

"I am going home to-morrow," observed the marquis, when he had been made comfortable, and Rigby had withdrawn. "Giralda prefers the old Park to this foggy, gloomy London. I wish I had been well enough to escort her to Hyde Park and about town, but the gay town sights must be deferred until a future visit."

"You will scarcely be well enough to travel to-morrow, uncle," suggested Lord Adlowe.

"I shall be quite well enough," asserted the marquis, with a grim smile. "My foot is getting better continually under these cooling lotions; and besides, well or ill, I shall go. There is nothing like determination to carry one through a disagreeable affair."

"If I might venture to advise you, uncle," said Lord Adlowe, "I should suggest that you remain in town a month, put yourself under the treatment of some famous physician, and introduce Miss Arevalo into society. I am sure she would create a sensation. You could readily find her a suitable *chaperon*. Your favourite, the Lady Beatrice Hampton, would no doubt gladly introduce your *protégée*."

He looked at Giralda keenly, and the marquis's gaze was also turned inquiringly upon the maiden.

"What do you say, my dear?" inquired the old lord, with a fatherly smile which thoroughly transfigured his gruff face. "Do you want to stay? Speak freely, my child. It will give me pleasure to grant any wish that you may form."

"I do not wish to stay, my lord," replied Giralda, looking up bravely, but speaking in a voice that quivered in spite of her efforts to preserve its steadiness. "I love the Park, and I do hope you will be able to go back to-morrow!"

"There!" exclaimed the marquis, triumphantly, turning upon his nephew, "what do you think of that decision, sir? You see that all women are not fond of gaiety and frivolous society. 'You see,' he added, in an undertone, with an exultant smile, "that old, and gruff, and cross as I am—a miser, and all that—my society is yet desired, and I am really loved by a beautiful and lovely young girl!"

Lord Adlowe became thoughtful.

"It is a pity," he said, after a brief pause, "that Miss Arevalo should not at least taste the cup of pleasure. She will not carry from London a single pleasant remembrance, unless it be of her visit to the theatre. By the way," he added, fixing a glance upon Giralda's face, "it was singular that the Lady Beatrice Hampton should have fainted dead away at sight of Miss Arevalo! I had always supposed, as the world did, that her ladyship was as emotionless as a statue. What could have caused her to faint?"

"Might it not have been the heat?" asked the young girl, raising her wondrous blue eyes, now dark and liquid and glowing, to Adlowe's face, with a wonderful self-command. "I felt ill myself at about the same time!"

Her coolness and utter lack of emotion almost stag-

gered Adlowe's conviction of a secret between Lady Beatrice Hampton and his uncle's young *protégée*. On beholding the strange emotion of both at the theatre, he had conceived, as the reader knows, a host of suspicions, all of which had been rudely shocked by the day's experience.

The visit with which his lordship had threatened the Lady Beatrice after her return home from the theatre, on the previous evening, had been made during the afternoon preceding his visit to the uncle, but her ladyship's manner, in response to his inquiries, had been at once so cool and defiant and haughty, that he had begun to believe himself utterly mistaken. The glimpse he had had of the Countess of Arevalo, on his entrance into his uncle's parlour, had farther mystified him; and lastly, Giralda had given a rude shock to the ideas he had conceived.

"I am either the most foolishly suspicious of men," he thought, looking at the bright, dark face of the maiden, "or the keenest and shrewdest! The Lady Beatrice and this young girl have either been grossly wronged by me in my thoughts, or there is some strange and deep mystery between them which even I cannot solve! I shall not remain long in my present uncertainty!"

At this juncture Giralda arose, excused herself, and quietly withdrew, departing to her own chamber, desirous of sparing herself farther cross-examination at the hands of her parents' enemy.

"A beautiful girl!" said Lord Adlowe, when the door had closed behind her. "A perfect hour! Do you really intend to adopt her as your daughter, my lord?"

"I intend to keep her with me as long as she will stay," returned the marquis, coldly. "I shall make provision for her future to-morrow. My lawyer will visit me in the morning, bringing with him my will for signature!"

"Miss Arevalo is a fortunate young lady," observed Adlowe, lightly. "No doubt you will leave her a pretty penny, my lord."

"I shall settle upon her over sixty thousand pounds," said the marquis, quietly.

A greedy look came over Adlowe's face. It was he who had spread the report of his uncle's miserly character—it was he who had instilled into his cousin Geoffrey the belief that Lord Trevalyan was a miser—while avarice and love of money had been the besetting sins of his own nature. The announcement of his lordship's intentions gave him a terrible pang.

"Sixty thousand pounds to go to a stranger!" he exclaimed, bitterly. "Uncle, you are being imposed upon by a clever adventurer!"

"Sir!" thundered the old marquis, with a look before which the villainous nephew shrank, "beware how you speak of one whom I love, and whose good name is my especial charge! I warn you, beware!"

"But, uncle," said Adlowe, deprecatingly, "you pretend to be just. Is this just to rob me of what I have always expected?"

"You had no right to expect my savings. The income is mine to use absolutely as I please."

"But I need money, my lord. I am seriously embarrassed in my affairs," said Adlowe, earnestly. "My own estates came to me encumbered with mortgages. I have always looked forward to coming into the Trevalyan property, as a slave looks forward to freedom. My debtors have been induced to wait until that happy period—you see I speak freely. I have counted upon your savings to clear my own heavily mortgaged property. It is madness to think of leaving this money to a young girl of whose existence you did not dream a month ago!"

"Of that I must be permitted to judge for myself," exclaimed Lord Trevalyan, haughtily.

"The world will say that you are in your dotage."

"What do I care for the world?" cried the marquis, with a magnificent scorn.

"Your friends will laugh at you!"

"Then they will prove themselves not my friends, and I will not give up a cherished plan to please my enemies."

"Think of my debts and necessities, uncle—"

The old marquis sneered.

"Think of my years of loneliness," he returned, "when you never came near me! Think of the years during which I seldom or never heard from you! Think of the helplessness of your present demand, and the reasons with which you urge it! Don't talk to me! I have no patience with your selfish greed! I am determined to do one kindly act before I die, to make the life of one person smooth. You cannot change my resolve!"

"Have you seen this Count Arevalo?" inquired Adlowe, abruptly.

Lord Trevalyan replied in the negative.

"There is no such person, in my belief!" declared Adlowe, hotly. "This 'countess' who came here to-night is not that girl's mother! The mother is a mystery. The father is dead!"

"How do you know this?" demanded the marquis, with an astounded look.

"I don't know it. I have simply guessed it," was the quick response. "Are you blind, uncle? Do you suppose that this girl's blue eyes are an accident? Do you suppose, too, that it was simply by some strange freak of nature that she bears the Trevalyan stamp on her features? How did she come to have Geoffrey Trevalyan's strange eyes?"

"I don't know," stammered the marquis in bewilderment. "What are you aiming at, Adlowe? What is it your words imply?"

"Simply this," hissed Adlowe, fairly driven to desperation: "I believe this Giralda Arevalo to be the daughter of your hated nephew, Geoffrey Trevalyan—born, of some unknown woman, before he went to the Brazils to die!"

Lord Trevalyan gave a wild, startled look at his nephew, and then silently turned away his face, covering it with his hands.

There was a brief silence between the two.

At length Adlowe said:

"I was too precipitate, my lord, in saying that I did not believe in the existence of a Count Arevalo. There may be such a personage, and he may have a wife and family. It does not follow, however, that Giralda is their child. They may have adopted her, or been hired to take charge of her."

The marquis did not reply. Adlowe noticed that a strange tremor was shaking the Herculean figure, and he did not venture to soon speak again.

He watched the old lord for a long time in silence. Then he moved uneasily in his chair to attract the attention of his relative.

In this he was successful. The marquis raised his head and turned his face towards his nephew, revealing a stern, set countenance, on which the traces of a mighty emotion yet lingered.

"Adlowe," he said, in a low voice, his eyes burning with a strange expression the younger man could not analyse, "it is barely possible that your suspicion is right! If it were true, it would account for the mutual attraction between me and the child. Adlowe, understand me fully. If Geoffrey was still living, I would pursue him like a Nemesis. I would not be satisfied until his cowardly assassin's soul knew something of the tortures I have felt. I would never rest, and the grand eyes blazed now with terrible fires—"never! until the law had wreaked its vengeance upon him, and he knew himself a helpless, disgraced, outcast convict! But, Adlowe," and now a broken thrill pulsed through the concentrated voice, and the fires in the eyes were suddenly dimmed, "there was a time when his evil passions slept, and Geoffrey was an innocent boy. If Giralda were, what your strange suspicions indicate, his child, the offspring of that period of boyish innocence, she could not have inherited that hypocrisy and baseness. She is what he might have been. We will not discuss the question farther. Whoever and whatever she may be, I will keep the child and provide for her as I have said!"

A malignant scowl for a moment convulsed the polished features of Lord Adlowe. It disappeared almost immediately, but not before the marquis had observed it.

"You will excuse me for not prolonging the interview," said the latter, with dignity. "Come and see me to-morrow before we leave, or come down to the Park at any time, but leave me now, Adlowe."

He leaned forward, touching the hand-bell on the table. His valet immediately made his appearance, and Lord Adlowe arose and took his leave, a host of evil passions surging like an angry sea in his breast.

"Sixty thousand pounds," he muttered, as he made his way down the stairs and into the street. "The old dotard! No man in his senses would give that sum to a girl whom he had not known a fortnight, and whose very existence is a mystery. I would send him to a mad-house if I could."

He hailed a hansom cab at this juncture, entered it, and was driven to his hotel. He hastened up to his own chambers with a surly face and an embittered heart.

His chamber, into which he burst abruptly, was dimly lighted and cheerless in aspect. The fire had nearly burnt itself out. His valet was stretched on the rug before the hearth sleeping soundly.

Adlowe awakened him rudely by a touch with his foot, and ordered him to stir up the fire and draw

the curtains. Then he sat down, gloomy and discontented.

He was in this mood a half-hour later, when a visitor entered the chamber.

As his lordship had expected, he was Rush, the detective.

"No news yet, I suppose?" said his lordship, moodily, motioning his visitor to a seat. "It is strange how easily a woman can elude all your watchfulness, Rush."

"Women are worse to track than men, my lord," responded the detective, philosophically, seating himself. "They are full of their little arts and wiles when they are watched; but my lady beats all I ever saw. She's a remarkable woman—remarkable!"

"And that's all you have come to tell me?" asked Adlowe, disappointedly.

"No, my lord," returned the detective, looking vacantly at his employer. "I have tried to get into the good graces of Mistress Fleck, her ladyship's seamstress and tire-woman, since I last saw your lordship. I tried to make love to her, but she snapped me up short. I offered her money to betray her mistress, and the way she stormed at me wasn't slow. Talk of a Pagan's devotion to his idol! 'Twon't compare with Fleck's devotion to her mistress!"

"You have come, then, simply to report this failure?"

"No, my lord. It is merely incidental," and the detective's countenance grew still more vacant of expression. "I came to say, my lord, that I saw a lady come out of Hampton House this evening that I hadn't seen go in. She walked to the corner and took a cab, rode for a little, got out, walked a short distance, took another cab, and drove straight to the hotel. Stayed an hour and five minutes. Came down directly after your lordship went up the stairs. Entered cab, and went back to Hampton House same way as she had come. Very clever woman, whoever she was. Is there such an inmate of the Hampton family?"

"No. Describe her," cried Adlowe, excitedly.

"Tall, stout, with thick black veil, old-fashioned bonnet, and two long yellow curls. Dressed in black silk. Seemed to be a respectable old dowager."

"It is the same woman," ejaculated Lord Adlowe, with increasing excitement. "She went to call on my uncle, Lord Trevalyan. She is the Countess of Arevalo, an actress, or pretended actress."

"Never heard the name," said the detective. "If you know her, it's all right, my lord. Of course the Lady Beatrice Hampton would not disguise herself to go and call on a nobleman that she knew well. My error arose from excess of zeal—"

"Let us first see that you have erred in following this woman from Hampton House," interrupted Adlowe, rising, and pacing the floor. "I never saw her till to-night. My uncle really knows nothing of her. There came to my uncle only last week, in answer to an advertisement for a companion, a beautiful young girl, the image of my dead cousin, Geoffrey Trevalyan. He brought this girl up to London with him. Her resemblance to Geoffrey, whom he once loved as much as he now hates his memory, has made a strong impression upon him. He is going to make a will to-morrow, leaving her a handsome fortune. He has seen none of her relatives, save this pretended or real countess. The countess appeared to-night to consent to the adoption of her child by the marquis. My idea is, Rush, that this girl has not Geoffrey's eyes and the Trevalyan features without reason."

The detective looked like a bloodhound when he scents his prey.

"Why has the Lady Beatrice never married?" continued Adlowe hurrying in his walk. "Was she secretly married to Geoffrey before he fled? There was plenty of time for a marriage by license after my cousin was expelled from the Park. Is this girl the offspring of that secret union?"

"The theory is plausible," said the detective.

"It is more than plausible. What more natural than such a course? Oh, I have been blind!" and his lordship raged to and fro. "The girl is their child—the child of the Lady Beatrice and Geoffrey Trevalyan. She was sent to the Park to win the old man's heart and his savings!"

"If the young lady is the daughter of the late Geoffrey Trevalyan," observed the detective, "she is the rightful heir of the Trevalyan estates."

Lord Adlowe reeled as if he had been shot.

"So she is!" he faltered, his face becoming pale to ghastliness. "I—I must be deceived. I have alarmed myself unnecessarily. Yet, Rush, I wish you would institute a search of the church registers at the

West-end. Look sharply for the record of such a marriage in the registers of 1850. Spare no pains, time, or money. I will pay liberally for everything!"

He sat down, trembling.

"It is by no means certain," he said, as if reassuring himself, after a pause, "that the countess was the Lady Beatrice disguised. My anxieties make me fearfully suspicious. There may be really a Countess of Arevalo, and she may know the Lady Hampton, although the countess is said to be an actress. I will know the truth to-morrow," and he shut his eyes firmly together. "One thing is proven to my satisfaction. There is some mysterious connection between the Lady Beatrice and Miss Arevalo. It could scarcely have been Miss Arevalo's strange resemblance to the dead Geoffrey Trevalyan that made her ladyship faint. And yet it is barely possible. I shall hasten my marriage with the Lady Beatrice," he added, and acquire the right to know all her secrets. I will not dally along in this manner. I will be no longer played with. I know and suspect enough," and his lordship's brows knotted themselves together darkly, "to make me a dangerous and terrible enemy. I will give the Lady Beatrice a chance to secure me as a friend and ally. She will not dare again to refuse me!"

These threats were muttered under his breath, and neither the detective nor the valet comprehended their import.

"The mysterious absences of the Lady Beatrice from her home—her persistent celibacy—her secrecy in going and coming from Hampton House," remarked the detective, thoughtfully, "all point to interests outside of her own proper home. If Geoffrey Trevalyan were still living—if she were his wife—if this young girl were their child, I could understand why the young lady has been sent to Trevalyan Park. If we go on the ground that Mr. Geoffrey is dead, and that there was a secret marriage between him and the Lady Beatrice, then Miss Arevalo is the offspring of that secret marriage. The absences of her ladyship were to visit this child, whom she dare not acknowledge as her own, because of the infamy covering the father's name. I incline to the latter theory."

"So do I," said his lordship, speaking as by a painful effort. "And this Countess of Arevalo?"

"Is the foster-mother of the girl."

"No, no!" cried Lord Adlowe, a sudden and great agitation convulsing him as a strange conviction forced itself on his soul with the swiftness of a flash. "That hand! I—I remember it now! The Countess of Arevalo is the girl's mother! The Countess of Arevalo is the Lady Beatrice Hampton cleverly disguised!"

He covered his pale face, trembling, and panic-stricken.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Nothing so hard but search will find it out.

Herrick.

There's no impossibility to him

Who stands prepared to conquer every hazard:

The fearful are the failing. Mrs. Hale.

On the morning subsequent to the visit of the so-called Countess of Arevalo, at an early hour, Lord Trevalyan was visited by his lawyer, with whom he was closeted some time. The result of the interview was the production of a will, duly signed, and witnessed by the Earl of Hampton and other noblemen, both of whom opportunely called upon their old friend the marquis by invitation. This will, as Lord Trevalyan had indicated, secured to the young girl known as Giralda Arevalo the sum of sixty-two thousand pounds, the fruits of his years of saving.

When the lawyers and visitors had departed, the old lord secured the will in his bosom—the lawyer having retained a duly attested copy—drew his writing case towards him, and proceeded to write several letters, addressed to fashionable milliners at the West End.

"Now that I have an object to spend money upon," he thought, as he had thought before, "people shall see whether I am a miser or not. I have not been able to spend my entire income upon myself, but I have someone now to share it with me. I shall, without doubt, live many years yet, despite this attack of gout, and I intend to take comfort with this little girl who has come to me so strangely, to become the pet of my old age."

His dark eyes softened in their expression, and his countenance became singularly gentle and pleasant.

He sealed his letters, and despatched them to be posted by his valet, and then sank into a thoughtful

mood, from which he was aroused by the opening of the door, and the sound of gentle footsteps within the room.

"Is it you, Giralda?" he asked, his rugged features warmed and lighted by a rare and tender smile, such as had not been seen upon them for years. "Come and sit beside me, my child."

He put out his hand and drew the young girl to a low chair beside him, and looked with a wistful tenderness into the bright, sweet face, and lovely changeable eyes upraised to his.

If the suggestion made by Lord Adlowe on the previous evening, that Giralda was the child of Geoffrey Trevalyan, had at first found a lodgment in his mind, it had now been dismissed. The difficulties in the way of such a possibility had caused him to refuse it farther consideration. The reflection that the Lady Beatrice Hampton had been tenderly beloved by the supposed dead Geoffrey, and that the young couple had been betrothed, had forced itself upon him with great effect. He considered it impossible that Giralda should be the offspring of a secret union between them, and he had finally come to the decision that the maiden's singular and striking resemblance to Geoffrey Trevalyan was merely one of those singular coincidences which will arise now and then to puzzle even the wisest brains.

And yet, in the secret recesses of his soul, Giralda, had become linked with the memory of Geoffrey as he remembered the latter in his happy, careless, innocent boyhood. It is certain that the involuntary association of the young girl with that boyish image, brought with it no aversion for the former. There was a strange tenderness and gentleness in his looks and manner now that he had not before displayed, and of which Giralda had not deemed him capable.

She was learning fast, however, that under all his eccentricity, foibles, and faults, he had a heart which was slowly warming from its long frozen torpor to the noblest impulses and affections.

"We shall start for home at noon," said the old nobleman, almost gaily, taking her small white hand in his. "The day is bright, and we shall have a delightful journey. My foot is quite well to-day, and I shall bear the travel without pain. You look a little pale since we came to town. You need the fresh Welsh air."

"I shall beglad to go back, my lord," replied Giralda, with a low sigh for the loved ones at the Laurels, of whom she had been thinking, and for whom at times her tender heart yearned painfully.

"Do not call me 'my lord,'" said the marquis, smiling. "You are no longer my secretary, but my adopted niece. You see I have changed the terms of our proposed relationship. I have a fancy," he added, gravely, and as if speaking to himself, "to hear you call me 'uncle.'"

Giralda's cheeks flushed a little at these words, and her hand trembled in his clasp. She stole a glance up at his face, but its expression reassured her.

"I will call you uncle, if you wish it," she said, softly. "And now, uncle," she added, shyly, "if you have no especial wish for my presence, I will get ready for our journey. It lacks only an hour of the appointed time."

She arose, bent over the old lord with a sudden impulse, and dropped a kiss on his forehead. The next moment she had glided from the room.

The succeeding hour was a busy one. Giralda's few trunks were packed, and an early dinner was eaten, at the conclusion of which the carriage was announced, and the party took its departure for the station.

The journey home was uneventful.

The day was drawing near its close when the travellers alighted at the little Trevalyan station. The brightness had all faded from the sky, and the dull gray clouds had a wintry appearance. A wild March wind was blowing from the west, bringing with it the saltiness and freshness of the sea. The mountains seemed outlined against the gray sky with more than usual grimness and ruggedness, and the little village had an aspect of forlornness and death in life.

The lumbering old Trevalyan chariot was in waiting, and the marquis, leaning on Rigby's arm, took his way towards it, groaning at every step. As Inez followed, with her little maid, she noticed that a coachman, in faded and tarnished livery, was holding the door of the vehicle ajar. He lifted his tall, cockaded hat to her, as if he looked upon her as his mistress, and then mounted the box, while Rigby assisted his master to a comfortable position beside the maiden. The little Welsh maid then entered the coach, Rigby climbed also to the box, and, with a grand flourish of his long whip, the old coachman

started up his horses, and the old chariot rattled along the stony street.

"I have engaged several of my old servants, my dear," said the old marquise, explainingly. "They have been living with a family near the village, but being thrown out of employment because of their employer's determination to travel on the Continent, I have re-engaged them. I intend to have the Park restored to its former comfort."

As the chariot ascended the hilly street, many curious eyes looked out from the windows of the pretty villa-like cottages. Evidently the villagers were already well acquainted with his lordship's increasing liberality, and looked upon it as a piece of good fortune for themselves. The shop-keepers especially, hurried to their doors with obsequious bows, as if soliciting the notice of the hitherto haughty and unsocial marquise.

Passing rapidly through the long, single street, the coach lumbered on its way towards the Park, up hills and down valleys, leaning from side to side in a threatening manner, and occasionally brought to a stop in some deep rut, from which extraction seemed almost impossible.

The shadows of evening shut out the dizzy precipices and frowning cliffs from sight long before the three miles intervening between the village and the Park were traversed, and lights, gleaming from the top of the mountain, served as a beacon to the tired travellers.

"We are almost home!" said the marquise, as the coach gave a violent lurch, flinging Giralda forward from her seat. "Those lights proceed from the Park. Are you very tired?"

"Oh, no, uncle," replied the maiden, cheerfully. "It seems to me, though, that this mountain road is dangerous. A misstep, in some places, and we might fall a hundred feet!"

"But we won't make the misstep. These horses are bred to mountain roads, and are sure-footed beasts," said Lord Trevalyan. "I should quite enjoy the ride if it were not for the wrenching my foot receives. Ah, we are about to turn into the home grounds. It will be easier now!"

He leaned back with an air of relief, and the coach now bowled over the ground more rapidly, in due time the vehicle drawing up before the entrance porch, where the travellers alighted.

To Giralda's surprise, the house was lighted throughout the front, in both stories, and an air of festivity seemed to pervade the entire establishment. The wide, double entrance-doors were flung open, and in the wide vaulted hall stood half-a-dozen servants, the women in snowy caps and ruffled aprons, and the men in a faded green and gold livery, all wearing smiles of welcome. At the head of the servants, in a rustling black silk gown, was Plumpton, the housekeeper, fairly radiant with the change that had been wrought in the establishment, and beside her was the newly reinstated former butler of the mansion, a pompous little man, who believed devoutly in the grandeur and glories of the Trevalyan family, and whose past year had been spent in an unsuccessful attempt at innkeeping in a neighbouring village.

The old hall, wainscoted with oak as black as ebony, with an oaken floor polished like glass, was festooned fancifully with holly and evergreens—the work of good Mrs. Plumpton.

Giralda, astonished at the strange spectacle before her gaze, moved nearer to the marquise, who drew her arm gently within his, and leaning on his massive gold-headed staff, conducted her into the hall.

"So you are back again, Black," was the unceremonious speech of his lordship, as he came to a halt. "I am glad to see you. All the old servants too. Let things go on as they used to. You will always look for orders to my niece, Miss Arevalo, who will be the mistress of my establishment."

Having thus made the servants of his household acquainted with their young mistress, his lordship conducted the maiden into the drawing-room, the door of which stood invitingly ajar.

The apartment, of which, previous to her departure for London, Giralda had had but a glimpse, was long and low, with an oaken ceiling, richly carved and groined. Five long windows to the east opened upon a terrace, but were now closed and curtained with ample folds of amber satin, which fell in lustrous waves upon the floor. The chandeliers, with a forest of wax candles, shed a full and glowing light. The wide polished grate held a blazing fire, the red rays of which streamed out upon the amber satin furniture, now freed from brown Holland coverings, and upon the handsome carpet and rug. An easy-chair and a sofa were drawn up to the fire, tempting the returned travellers to a luxurious rest.

The contrast between the late gloom and decay was striking. Giralda felt warmed to the very depths of her lonely little heart by the change, and a bright smile chased the look of weariness from her features. Even the marquise looked cheered and pleased, although the change was due only to the orders he had left with the housekeeper on the day of his departure.

"This is something like it!" he said, warming his hands over the red blaze, with an air of contentment. "What's that rascal Rigby staring at?" he asked abruptly, catching sight of his bewildered valet in the hall. "He's surprised, eh? They'll all be surprised before I get through."

At this moment the housekeeper entered, announcing that dinner was almost ready, and that she would accompany Giralda to her room, whither the young lady's maid and luggage had preceded her.

The maiden withdrew at once with the worthy dame to her own chamber, the renovated and brightened aspect of which pleased her. The little maid had unpacked the scanty luggage, and was now seated by the fire, awaiting her young mistress.

"Let me attend upon you to-day, miss," urged Mrs. Plumpton, eagerly. "If you would dismiss that child to the servant's hall, I would dress you!"

Giralda perceived that the good woman desired a private interview, and dismissed her maid at once.

"Did you ever see such a change, miss?" ejaculated the housekeeper, as soon as the door had closed behind the Welsh girl. "Six servants, besides the butler, the coachman, and the cook! And it's all your doings, miss! I knew when I saw your pretty face come into this house that you would bring us good luck! The old days are coming back again, and my lord will act like a Christian instead of a wild bear! I never thought to see this day!"

She looked at Giralda between smiles and tears.

"My lord wrote me a letter yesterday," she continued, "and told me you were no longer his secretary and companion, but his heiress to whatever he has power to leave away from his nephew. And you are his lordship's niece? That accounts for your strange likeness to the Trevalyans which puzzled me from the first. The folks of the village recognised you as a Trevalyan at church."

Giralda brushed out her rings of hair in silence.

The housekeeper took the brush from the young lady's hand, and gently plying it, resumed:

"I think my lord has been so miserably just to be eccentric. He hasn't seemed to have any interest in anything since poor Master Geoffrey died. But all that is to be changed. The plate is ordered down from the London bank, and we are to have company and grand times again. But, Miss Arevalo," she concluded, in a lower tone, "you won't forget to speak in behalf of poor Master Geoffrey, will you?"

"No, I will not forget, Mrs. Plumpton," was the gentle response. "I will do all I can to soften Lord Trevalyan's heart towards his poor nephew; but I have a hard task before me!" she added, sighing.

"I have left the poor lad's picture on your wall to remind you of your promise," said the old housekeeper. "I would die happy if I could only see that mystery of the attempted murder cleared up, and Master Geoffrey, with a wife and children, within these old walls. I can't help feeling, somehow, that he is living, and will be back some day. God help him then, unless his uncle's heart is softened before he comes!"

The worthy woman's tears blinded her, and she did not see the emotion her words had called to Giralda's face.

"You have more to contend with than you may think, in speaking for Master Geoffrey, Miss Arevalo," remarked Mrs. Plumpton, after a pause. "Lord Adlowe hates his cousin! If Master Geoffrey were to come back, Lord Adlowe would never come into the Trevalyan estates, and he thinks more of them than he does of his own soul! He's perjured himself more than once, to my thinking, and there's worse things he would do, rather than remain poor. Beware of him, miss. He's a terribly bad man!"

By this time Giralda's simple toilette was completed, and it was time to descend to the drawing-room. With a kind word, that went to the housekeeper's heart, she withdrew from her chamber.

"I am in my rightful position in the home of my ancestors," thought the maiden, as she slowly descended the stairs. "Lord Trevalyan little dreams of the right I have to call him uncle! He will make me heiress to his savings—mistress of his home—the entertainer of his friends! He will love me and cherish me. But in the hour he discovers my identity—if he should ever discover it—I shall be thrust

out as an unclean thing! I must not be discovered! Discovery would bring ruin upon my parents and my brothers! Discovery would bring disgrace and death!" and she shuddered. "By this time papa knows where I am. He thinks of me in my perilous position with fear and trembling! If I should fail! Oh, I cannot, dare not, must not fail! Every energy must be devoted to the great end of reconciling those two—uncle and nephew. Every hour must see some gain in my influence over Lord Trevalyan, whom already I love!"

She opened the door of the drawing-room, and entered the old lord's presence.

(To be continued.)

FACETIÆ.

A CHISEL.—Why is a sculptor at work on a marble bust of the authoress of "Lost and Saved," like a corporate town in Oxfordshire? Because he's Chipping Norton.—*Fun.*

A-WHEEL.—We are not quite sure whether the best term to apply to those who have run mad on the subject of velocipedes, is not "cranky."—*Fun.*

QUITE ANOTHER.

Funny Passenger (the conversation turning on the hard life of the horses): "Ah, I see you're not a believer in the transmigration of souls!"

Driver: "Well, I don't know, sir. For my part I likes 'em fried in the usual way!"—*Fun.*

WHEEZY DOES IT.—It is difficult to estimate the full extent of the suffering caused by our variable climate. Harvest reports state that in some parts of the country even the wheat is "hunky."—*Fun.*

The latest edition of the *Queen's Messenger*: "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

WHY did the Americans lose the boat race: Because they did not pull "half hard" (Harvard) enough.—*Will O' the Wisp.*

MOVING.—A man in the country says that he moved so often during one year that whenever a covered waggon stopped at his gate his chickens would fall on their backs and hold up their feet in order to be tied and thrown in.

A GENTLEMAN met a half-witted lad on the road, and placing in one of his hands a sixpence and a penny, asked him which of the two he would choose. The lad replied he would not be greedy, he would take the smallest.

AFTER THE DANCE.

Charles.

Tell me, Laura, why that sadness?

Tell me why that look of care?

Why has fled that look of gladness?

That thy face was wont to wear?

Laura.

Charles, 'tis useless to dissemble;

Well my face may wear a frown,

For I've lost my largest hairpin,

And my chignon's coming down!

SEVERE ON YOUNG TIMPKINS, WHO IS RAISING A MOUSTACHE.

His Sister (an accomplished tease): "A razor! Oh, Charlie, think of your good father and mother. Suicide at your age? Give me the razor. What can have induced you to purchase it?"

A SHARP BOY.

"Pa," said a little boy, "ought the teacher to flog me for what I did not do?"

"Certainly not, my boy," replied the father.

"Well," said the little fellow, "he did to-day, when I didn't do my sum."

TIT FOR TAT.

A traveller by bus to London had contracted to pay 1s. for his fare to the Bank. On arriving at the Flower Pot, in Bishopsgate Street, the conductor opened the door and said:

"Ve goes so furder, sir."

"Why, you told me," said the other, "that you went to the Bank."

"Ve call this the Bank, sir."

"Oh, very well," said the passenger, giving him sixpence; "I call that a shilling."

The fellow was so taken aback that he could not say a word, only calling out to the driver:

"I say, Bill, if that ere chap bean't a run-on, I'll be blowed."

ELEGANT WRITING.

A Lancashire journal, describing a confusion at the railway after a peoples' holiday at Alton Towers, says:—

"But for the humane and herculean efforts of Lord Shrewsbury there would have been disaster."

Herculean is a noble word, and we compliment the Vesuvian narrator, who had probably had a drop of the "crater."—*Punch.*

A DOUBTFUL COMPLIMENT.—A young lady in company with a right reverend prelate consented, after a long and coy resistance, to be led to the piano. When she sang, it was so badly that, as she finished, no one was found with sufficient heroism to express to the fair executant the collected thanks of the auditors. In this strait his lordship arose, and crossing the room, said, with sweetest smile: "Thank you, Miss—, very particularly. Another time, when you say you can't sing, we shall all know how to believe you."

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE FOOL.—Two men, the one a philosopher and the other a fool, were in the service of the same master, and both slept in the same bed, the philosopher on the outside. One morning, having overslept themselves, the master coming with a whip flogged the philosopher, who happened to be the nearest to his entrance into the room. "This I will avoid another time," said the philosopher to himself. On the next night, therefore, he changed sides with the fool. In the morning they again transgressed, and the master came to chastise them, but reflecting that he had before whipped the man that was nearest, he thought it but just the other should feel his displeasure; he went to the other side of the bed, and the blows fell again upon the philosopher; thus confirming the general truth—"the wisest cannot avoid their fate."

"LET HIM SQUEAL."

The beautiful town of Manchester, Vermont, so pleasantly situated at the foot of Equinox Mountain, is celebrated for two very fine hotels, the Vanderbilt and Equinox; also, though of less pretensions, the Vermont House, kept, at the time of my story, by George St.—e. George was a character considerably deaf, especially when he did not want to hear. Rallying him one day on his ability to hear or not to hear, he told me under promise of never telling, the following story:

When a young man, he worked on a farm for a stingy old farmer in an adjoining town. On leaving him, a balance of six shillings was due to George for wages. Having called repeatedly for his money the old man had some excuse for not paying. A sow of the old man's had a litter of pigs, consisting of four, one of them, which is generally the case, being a small runt, as they call them. George told the man that he would take a pig for his money; the old man said he might have the small one. George jumped in the pen, and seized the largest pig. The old man shouted:

"Take the small one!"

"Let him squeal," said George; "I can hold him." Old man, excited:

"Take the small one!"

"I'll risk his biting," replied George.

Old man, desperate, and as loud as he could below:

"Take the small one!"

"Let him squeal; I can hold him," answered George.

"Take him along, you deaf idiot; I can't make you hear anything."

George carried off his pig in triumph.

MAXIM FOR THE MILLION.—Action should follow thought. No farmer can plough a field by turning it over in his mind.—*F.W.*

WINCHESTER TWIGS.

The antiquities of the City of Winchester may have some interest for the autumnal excursionist. In the school-room of the celebrated college there his eye will be attracted by the following legend, pictorially illustrated, intended to admonish the neophyte, or fresh boy:

"Aut discat discere; manet sors tertia: cædi."

Winchester School, everybody knows, was founded by William of Wykeham. But our forefathers, in his day, were particular how they spelt their names. May we not conjecture that the founder of the above-named seat of learning was, when called by his right name, William of Whack'em?—*Punch*.

A NEGRO, on a trial in Philadelphia, for stealing, put in the plea of insanity. To prove this, it was said he might have stolen the big rooster, but he only took the small chickens.

NURSERY RHYME ON BYRON.—BY MADAME HARRIET BIECHER STOWE.

Fee, faw, fum,

I've found out the crime of an Englishman;

Tho' he and his sister are buried and dead,

I'll grind their bones to make my bread.

THE WAY TO OBTAIN A FREE RIDE.

"Plaze, sir," said a countryman to a traveller; "would yez be so oblaiging as to take me greatcoat here to Boston wit' yez?" "Yes," said the man in the wagon; "but how will you get it again?" "Oh, that's aisy, so it is," said the countryman, "I'll remain inside uv it."

A MAN courting a young woman was interrogated by her father as to his occupation. "I am a paper-hanger upon a large scale," he replied. He married the girl, and turned out to be a bill-sticker.

"No, Biddy," said Patrick to his wife, "you never catch a lie coming out of my mouth." "You may well say that," replied Biddy; "they fly out so fast that you can't catch 'em."

CHIGNONS will be higher than ever next month—some of them half-way up Mont Blanc.—*Judy*.

THERE is a time when we content ourselves with sitting at the window to see other people pass, and this is about the earliest symptom of middle age. The window which is the most eligible for this purpose is the old beam-window.

A MOST DECIDED CASE OF COMING DOWN.—In a case heard in one of the London police courts, a few days ago, the name of the defendant was Anne Boleyn, and on being asked how she came by her name, she replied, "that she believed she came down from Henry the Eighth."

MEMORY.

LIFE has a thousand haunted glens
Where troops of fairies hide,
And every breeze that sweeps the sea
Bears o'er the silver tide
A host of barques, whose snowy sails,
Like falling drops of rain,
Catch hues of sunshine from the past,
And send them back again.

The softest whisper of the wind
That stirs the budding bough,
Is haunted by some gentle voice,
Some half-forgotten vow,
That, like a chime of merry bells,
Once heard—a sad refrain—
By every nook in memory's halls
Is echoed back again;

The smallest ripple on a stream
Or song-note of a bird;
Each rustle of a falling leaf
By autumn breezes stirred;
The music of the gentle rain,
As murmurs in a shell
Tells of its home, the sea, so those
Of happier moments tell.

Ah, yes! a thousand haunted glens
Are found on every side;
Not one but holds some treasured thing
In its lone vistas wide;
And every bark that leaves the shore
To breast life's sea of tears,
Bears precious freight, some sparkling gems,
Born of the passing years. H. L. F.

GEMS.

THERE is as much greatness of mind in the owning of a good turn as in the doing of it; and we must no more force a requital out of season than be wanting in it.

SINCERITY is like travelling in a plain, beaten road, which commonly brings a man sooner to his journey's end than by-ways, in which men often lose themselves.

LET us never forget that every station in life is necessary: that each deserves our respect; that not the station itself, but the worthy fulfilment of its duties, does honour to a man.

A BAD HABIT.—Out of any one hundred men you run against you will find ninety-five worrying themselves into a low spirits and indigestion, about troubles that will never come.

BEAUTIFUL SENTIMENT.—Some one has remarked "The heart of woman draws to itself the love of others as the diamond draws up the sun's rays, only to return them with a tenfold strength and tenderness of beauty."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SWIMMERS' CRAMP.—Every summer brings in its sad list of drownings from cramp, and this season they have been rather more numerous than usual. The real nature of the muscular paralysis which suddenly sinks even the strongest and most expert swimmers without a moment's warning is necessarily very much a matter of conjecture. The result is in the majority of cases fatal, and even where the sufferer is saved, the shock followed by insensibility, prevents him from clearly remembering the symptoms. According to the common theory the cramp seizes the swimmer's legs. Though disabled for the moment from swimming there is no reason why a man with cramp in his leg should not float; indeed,

to throw himself on his back with legs distended would be almost an instinctive impulse, and in that position he could easily maintain himself without an effort, especially if accustomed to the water. It is the terrible characteristic of these seizures that the victim goes down instantly, and without a struggle. This is disposed to attribute, not to the stiffening of a limb, but to cramp of the respiratory muscles by which the expansion of the lungs is checked, or the air-chords expelled; thus deprived of its buoyancy, the body sinks. Swimming undoubtedly puts a considerable strain on these muscles, and there is a plausibility in the theory, though it is difficult to ascertain the truth with certainty.

STATISTICS.

CULTIVATED LAND IN IRELAND.—The Irish agricultural returns show an increase under crops this year of 27,872 acres. There is a large decrease in oats (16,857 acres), but, on the other hand, 34,591 acres more than last year of barley are reported. The green crops cover about the same area as last year. In live stock there is an increase of 2,545 horses, 80,998 cattle, and 210,215 pigs. Sheep, however, show a decrease of 233,338. The total estimated value of live stock is 34,911,360*l.*, being an increase of 530,944*l.* over last year.

EXPORTS OF MACHINERY.—During the six months ending June 30, this year, the value of the machinery exported was 1,472,572*l.*, as compared with 1,269,756*l.* in the corresponding period of 1868, and 1,390,216*l.* in the first six months of 1867. In these totals the shipments for June figured for 315,423*l.*, against 269,138*l.* in June, 1868, and 299,786*l.* in June, 1867. The increase observable in this year's figures arose in the shipments to Russia, Belgium, and Australia. Thus the value of the machinery exported to Russia in the first half of this year was 189,333*l.*, against 118,464*l.* and 151,845*l.* respectively; to Belgium, 94,468*l.*, against 68,970*l.* and 77,924*l.*; and to Australia, 102,740*l.*, against 43,895*l.* and 38,306*l.* There has also been some increase this year in the value of the exports to Holland, Egypt, British India, &c.; but, on the other hand, the demand for British machinery appears to have decreased as regards France and Spain.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PRINCE NAPOLEON has thanked the Cobden Club for electing him honorary member, and expressed sympathy with the objects of the club itself.

THE expedition to the North Pole, directed by M. Gustave Lambert, is unable to set out, the necessary funds not having been contributed.

FROM a return presented to the New Zealand Parliament it appears that during the year ending June, 1869, 260 rebels were killed.

ALTHOUGH the season on the whole has been so unpropitious, the sub-tropical gardening in Battersea Park, has proved successful.

A RUMOUR is current in Paris that the Emperor will abdicate when the Prince Imperial attains the age of fourteen.

WARSAW is to be converted into a fortress of the first rank. General Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, will be charged with the execution of the design.

OYSTERS.—The loss of oysters in the oyster beds at Areachon, due to the coincidence of the extraordinary low tides and the exceptional heat of the 10th, 11th, and 12th of July last, is estimated at 1,200,000*l.*, or close upon 50,000*l.*

JAMES RICHARDSON, the private in the Grenadier Guards who deserted his post while on duty on the north terrace of Windsor Castle about a fortnight ago, was captured within eight and forty hours, and has been sentenced to be imprisoned 168 days, and to be marked with the letter "D."

AN institution has been added to those now existing in the Church of England, the object of which is "to afford to the working clergy opportunities of refreshment to body and soul at the lowest reasonable cost." The institution is near Malvern, and the Rev. James Skinner, M.A., vicar of Nowlands, has been appointed warden provis'o mally.

THE PUBLIC RECORDS.—The deputy-keeper of the public records reports that the six volumes published in 1868 of the chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the middle ages make a total of 92 volumes, and that more than 20,000 copies of these volumes have been sold, and more than 3,000 copies have been presented to home, foreign, and colonial libraries. This great national publication has materially contributed to the assistance of historical inquiries. Nineteen more volumes are now in the press.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FAIRY.—Old postage-stamps are not saleable.

MISERY.—Our advice to you is: "Work harder and sigh less."

AGNES.—Keep truth for your motto and guide, and you will be the gainer in the end.

PELLO MOSS.—A letter addressed to the lady, Piccadilly or Highgate, will reach her through the post-office.

ROGER.—Choose always the way that seems best, how rough soever it may be; custom will render it easy and agreeable.

D. G.—It is absolutely necessary that a dress coat should be worn by a gentleman at a ball; of course, his other apparel should be "dress" also.

ROSEWOOD.—To alleviate a cough, take equal parts of syrup of poppies, oxymel of squills, and simple oxymel. Mix, and take a teaspoonful occasionally.

HENRY.—1. 148, Piccadilly, or Gunnersbury Park, Ealing. 2. Pronounce the words as if spelled "Kivi nine" and "Tryo."

MARIA.—Envy is littleness of soul which cannot see beyond a certain point, and if it does not occupy the whole space, feels itself excluded.

A LAWYER.—You write a very good hand. There is now to be purchased at most chemists' shops, for a few pence, Perry's Ink Extractor, which will remove ink from parchment as well as from paper linen, &c.

ETHEL.—The youngest son's children are his next of kin. In default of children and in the event of intestacy, the father of the intestate would take the whole, if the deceased left no widow. Your handwriting is good.

AN OLD READER.—You cannot remove a tumour without surgical assistance. Apply at once to a hospital surgeon, who will, in all probability, cure you without much pain, and remember delays are dangerous, especially in such cases.

HOMER SWEET HOMER.—Why not put your powers of discernment and your ardent longings to the test? If you are in earnest you need sigh no more. You can render to yourself more efficient aid than it is in our power to bestow.

A CONSTANT READER.—Take less sleep, rise early, and inhale the morning air, use the cold bath, and take some tonic medicine, which you can purchase at a chemist's. Correspondents should use a more definite signature than the one by which you have written to us.

C. G. S.—The height of Salisbury Cathedral is as follows: To the top of the side aisles, 44ft.; to the parapet of the church, 87ft.; to the ridge of the roof, 115ft.; to the summit of the spire, 404ft. 2. The tower and spire of Chichester Cathedral are 300ft. high.

SEA BIRD.—We are sorry we cannot accommodate you with the precise receipt for which you write. There is a mode of imitating ground glass by dabbing putty upon the glass with the fingers. The touch should be light and even.

MARK.—The term subaltern is applied to all commissioned officers in the British army below the rank of captain. A subaltern is not considered eligible to hold the appointment of aide-de-camp until he has been with his regiment at least one year.

LEAH.—The species of reed used in making the Nile boats was that called papyrus, so valuable in ancient times for its stalk, of which paper was made. Great pains was taken with the cultivation of the plant, and the right of selling it belonged to the king, so that it formed a part of the State.

PERCY.—The "Alexandrian Codex" is a manuscript of the whole Bible in Greek, said to have been written by a lady named Thecla, in the sixth century, and to have belonged to the Patriarch of Alexandria in 1093. It was presented to Charles I. of England, in 1628, by Cyrilus Lucaris, Patriarch of Constantinople. It was placed in the British Museum in 1753, and was printed in facsimile, 1786-1821.

LUCY.—The terms *Troubadours* and *Trouveres* are derived from the French *troubler* and *trouver*, to find or invent. They were the poets of the middle ages (from the eleventh to the fifteenth century). The former flourished in the south of France and north of Spain, and used the *Langue d'oc* (that is, as for our, yes); the latter flourished in the north of France, and used the *Langue d'oïl* (that is, oil for oui). The Troubadours produced romances, yet excelled chiefly in lyric poetry. The Trouveres excelled in romances, several of which are extant, as the "*Brat D'Angleterre*" and the "*Ros*," by Wace; the romance of the

"*Ros*," by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung. The Troubadours were usually accompanied by *Jongleurs*, who sang their masters' verses with the accompaniment of the guitar.

HERBERT.—Your handwriting is good, and suitable for a merchant's office. We are sorry to observe that your letter contains an error in orthography.

NEW ZEALAND.—Bodmin, in Cornwall, is an inland town. You can get from Monmouth to Gloucester and then on to Bodmin via Bristol and Exeter, by railway, the journey through.

R. J. WAKEFIELD.—We are not acquainted with the "trap" about which you write. You are, doubtless, aware that camphor, spirits of camphor, or a decoction of tobacco are good specifics against moths.

AUSTRALASIA.—The examinations to be passed by candidates for the situations of gangers and tide-waiters embrace: Handwriting and orthography, arithmetic (including vulgar and decimal fractions), English composition, geography, and English history. The limitation of age is from 20 to 25. Your handwriting will do.

C. HAZELL.—We believe the office in question to be sound. You should, however, ascertain the reason why no answer has been forwarded to your letter. In such days as these it will be well, also, to watch for the report of the half-yearly or annual meeting, and then to "compare notes." We never reply by post.

C. A.—Your handwriting needs improvement. The ingredients you refer to can be procured at a chemist's. You must not allow the dye to get upon your skin. The plumpness of your hands is irremediable. Possibly, the hoarseness of which you complain arises from weakness and fatigue. Take a small quantity of the infusion of quassia two or three times a day.

H. W.—The stamp duty is correct. We can hardly give an opinion as to the removal of the buildings without a perusal of the documents. Though not expressly mentioned there may be some covenant which, by implication, provides for their preservation. You had better show your lease to some judicious friend and with him discuss its terms.

TO A FALSE LOVER.

Oh, that my memory could efface
Thine image graven there!
And yet my misery loves to trace
Those features ever dear.
I still would cherish in my soul,
As my most sacred right,
That angel form whose sweet control
Thrilled me with love's delight.
Aye, thou dost take my hand in thine
And press it to thy heart;
And vow by every name divine
That we shall never part.
And thou dost seal each loving word
With kisses warm and free;
That pledge, thus sealed, which angels heard,
Is sacred still to me.
Did I but dream these precious things?
Were they all false and vain?
Are they but my imaginings—
The fragments of the brain?
Then where is truth—where may I find
The gem of honest love?
Where, where, among all woman kind,
May I thy virtue prove?
J. J.

EDWARD.—Amen is an ancient Hebrew word, meaning true, faithful, certain, at the end of a prayer; it implies so be it; at the termination of a creed, so it is. It is used in the Jewish and Christian assemblies at the conclusion of prayer.

J. WESTON.—Banneret is a dignity between baron and knight, conferred by the king under the royal standard; it was created in England in 1290, and renewed by Henry VII. in 1485. It was discontinued from the reign of Charles I., but was revived by George III. in the person of Sir William Erskine, in 1764.

SUBSCRIBER.—Not being acquainted minutely with your taste, we find a difficulty in the recommendation of a book of the description to which you refer. Writers seldom confine their comic powers to the delineation of one sex peculiarly. If Jerrold's portraiture of Mrs. Candle makes us roar, there is also a deep fund of humour in the quaint sayings of her spouse.

CAROLINE.—From the earliest time Good Friday has been held as a solemn fast in remembrance of the crucifixion of our Saviour on Friday, A.D. 33. Its appellation of good appears to be peculiar to the Church of England. Our Saxon forefathers denominated it Long Friday, on account of the great length of the offices and fastings enjoined on this day.

CONRAD.—Amnesty means a general pardon for political disturbances; it was first granted by Thraebulus, the Athenian patriot, after expelling the thirty tyrants with the assistance of only thirty friends, B.C. 403. Acts of amnesty were passed after the Civil War in 1651, and after the two rebellions in England in 1715 and 1745. Napoleon the Third, after his victorious campaign in Italy, granted an amnesty to all political offenders in 1859.

MARY.—"Alexandrinus," verses of twelve syllables, were first written by Alexander of Paris, about 1164, and named after him. The last line of the Spenserian stanza is an Alexandrine. In Pope's Essay on Criticism, this verse is thus happily exemplified:

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow
length along.

The longest English poem wholly in Alexandrine verse is Drayton's Polyolbion, published in 1612.

JUSTIN.—The word "almanac" is derived from the Arabic *al-mamāh*, to count. The Egyptians computed time by instruments. The Alexandrians had almanacs. Log calendars were anciently in use. In the British Museum and universities are curious specimens of early almanacs. Michael Nostradamus, the celebrated astrologer, wrote an almanac in the style of Merlin, 1556. The principle foreign almanacs are the *Almanach de France*,

first published in 1599, and the *Almanach de Gotha*, 1764. The stamp duties on English Almanacs was abolished in 1834, since which time they have been innumerable.

LAVINIA.—The French word *ensemble* is a term applied to music in parts when the several performers appear to be so animated by one and the same feeling, that the whole is given with that perfect smoothness both as regards time and style, so as to leave nothing farther to be desired.

Z. A.—The writing is fair enough. You would require much influence to obtain a clerkship in a bank. The salary of a junior is about sixty pounds per annum. Out of regard for you we abstain from prescribing any mixture to lighten the colour of your hair, being convinced that if you attempt to interfere with nature's arrangements in the matter, the laugh will be in a very different quarter to your present anticipation.

J. J.—Black Rod, the usher belonging to the order of the garter is so called from the black rod he carries in his hand; it has a gold lion at the top, and is borne by the sovereign's chief gentleman usher, instead of the mace, at the Feast of St. George at Windsor, instituted in 1549. He also keeps the door when a chapter of the order is sitting, and during the sessions of parliament attends the House of Lords.

MARIAN.—There is one in the world who feels for him who is sad a keener pang than he feels for himself; there is one to whom reflected joy is better than that which comes direct; there is one who rejoices more in another's honour, more than in any which is one's own; there is one on whom another's excellences shed no beam but that of delight; there is one who loses all sense of self in the sentiment of kindness and devotion to another; that one is woman.

JUSTICE.—You cannot legally detain the child for her mother's debt. The recovery of the debt can be sought by summons in the county court. But, under the circumstances, and until the mother is urgent in her demand for her daughter, there is no harm in your keeping the child if she elects to remain with you. As long as she does so remain, however, you are bound to treat her with kindness and care.

W. P. TRUEMAN favours us with a long epistle upon the unsatisfactory manner in which many modern houses are built, and he gives us no fewer than thirteen directions, all of which must be observed if we would not be "taken in." W. P. T. says that one of the great frauds of the day are houses which are "built to sell, to let, and not to last as dwellings." We are afraid, however, that if we studied our friend's directions in the most earnest manner, we should still feel the necessity of employing a surveyor and a solicitor, were we about to purchase, unless, indeed, W. P. T. were then at our side.

A CONSTANT READER (Burnley).—Although we have read of the gutta serena solution, we have never seen any of it used for map varnishing. We take it that such a varnish would be too opaque for the purpose. The article is not known to the best houses. Try a spirit varnish made for the purpose, and sold at about eightpence per pint. Before varnishing give three coats of size, and manipulate in a place free from dust. You can procure the materials at a respectable oilman's shop. However, if you prefer to make experiments with gutta serena, you will find that it is soluble in sulphide of carbon, spirits of turpentine, and benzine.

FLORENCE, tall, good figure, dark hair, light complexion, dark blue eyes, and good looking. Respondent must be respectable and middle-aged.

S. BRIGHTMAN.—From the manner in which you have framed your question we assume that there are no children of the marriage. If this be so the widow is entitled to half the property, and the father of the intestate to the remaining half. The father being alive the brothers have no claim.

LILLIE, twenty-one, 5 ft. 4 in., tall, dark hair and eyes, fair complexion, and a cheerful disposition. Respondent must be tall, dark, good looking, about twenty-five, well educated, and in easy circumstances.

A WARM-HEARTED YORKSHIRE LASS would be glad to correspond with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be kind and warm-hearted, and must send his *carta de visis*.

SOPHY AND ROSE.—"Sophy," dark, good tempered, and will have money on the death of a maiden aunt. Respondent must be about twenty-two, dark, with an "interesting look," and in affluent circumstances. "Rose," blue eyes, fair hair, and good temper. Respondent must be dark, amiable, fond of music, and in easy circumstances.

LUCY L., eighteen, tall, fair complexion, light brown hair, dark blue eyes, very lively disposition, and thoroughly good. Respondent must be a tradesman that would make her a loving husband.

YOUNG HOPEFUL, twenty-three, moderate income, 5 ft. 10 in., dark. The young lady to be possessed of good family connections and a loving disposition.

EDWARD would be glad to exchange *cartes* with "Lizzie," whose communication appeared in our number for 21st August. Edward is good looking, has dark whiskers, moustache, and hair, and is a tradesman in good position.

* * * Now Ready, VOL. XII. OF THE LONDON READER. Price 4s. 6d.

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